

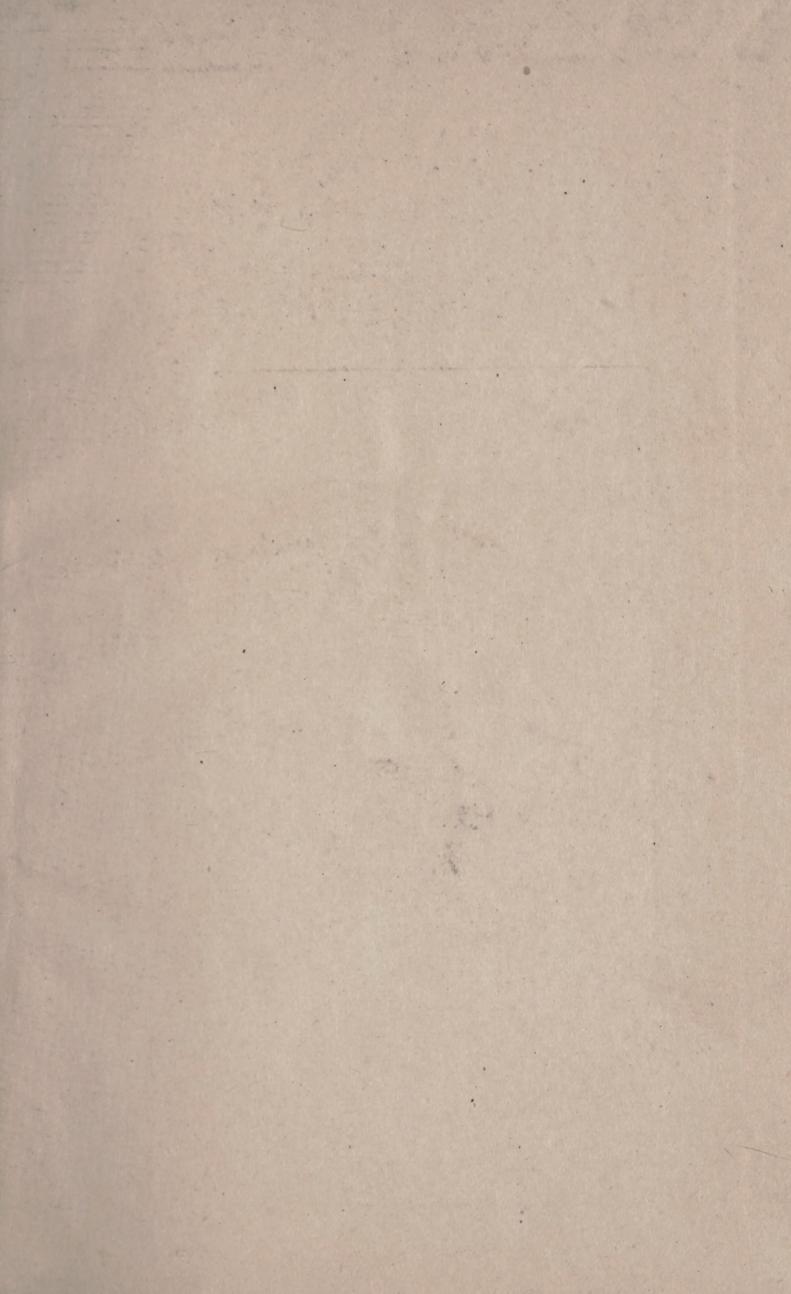


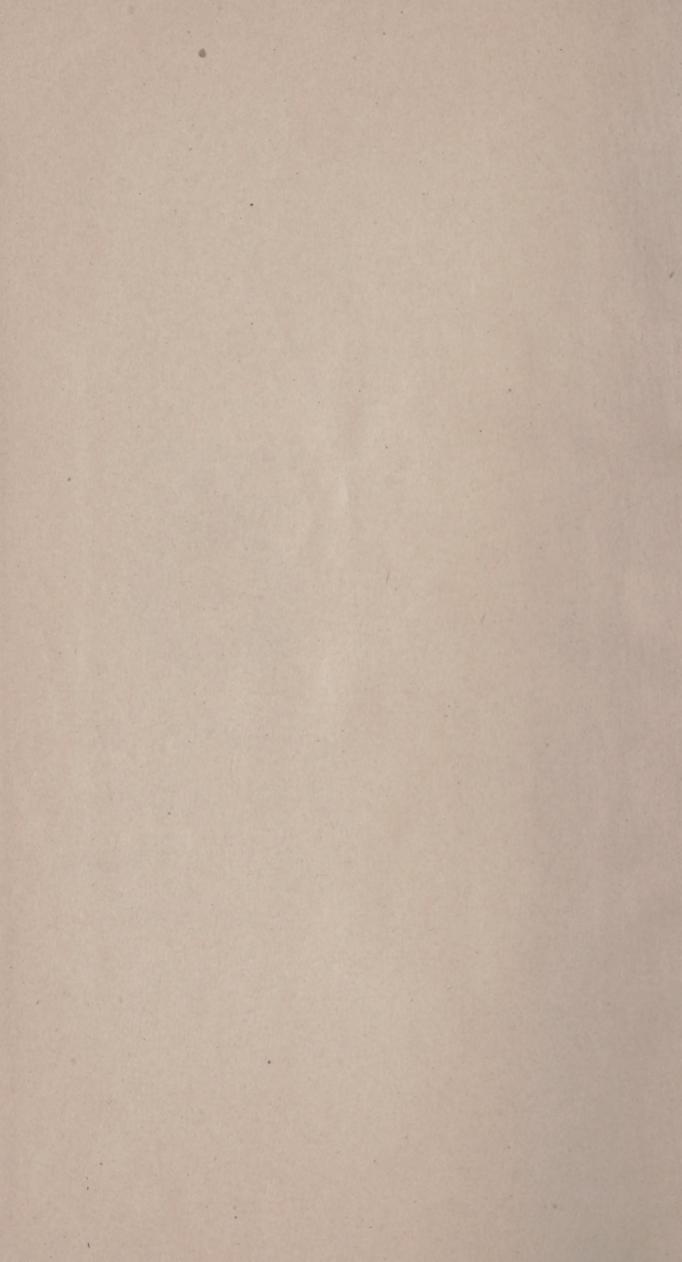
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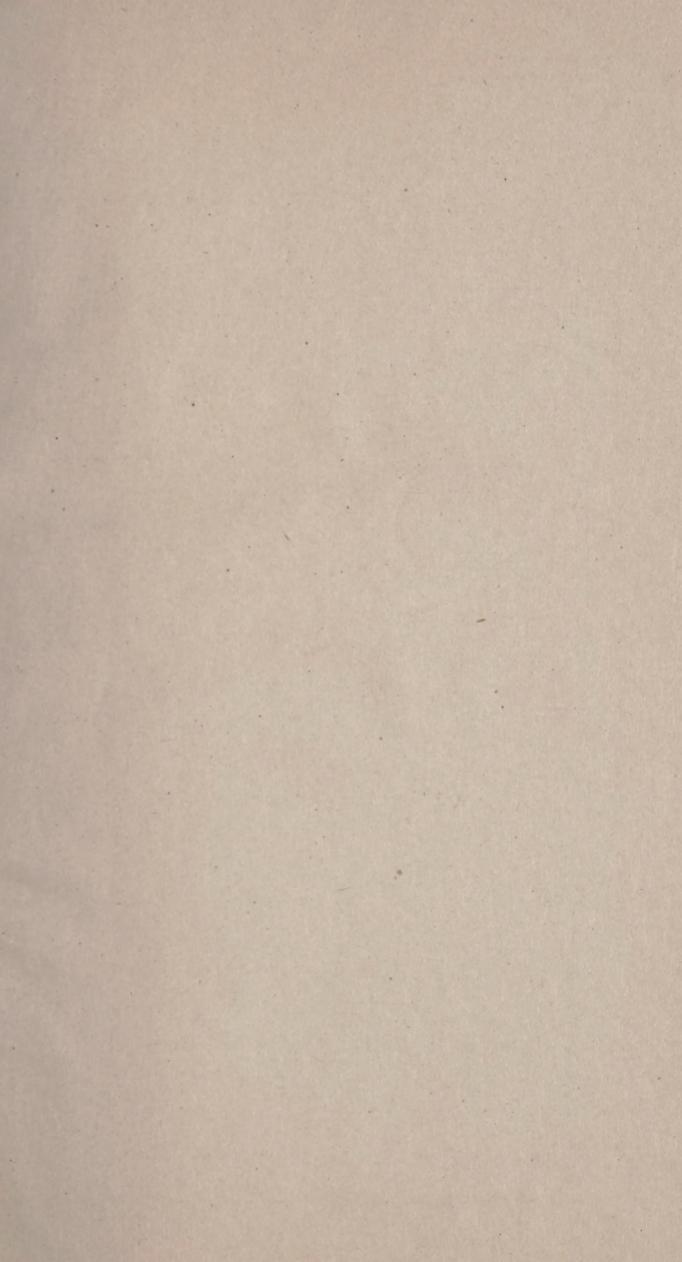
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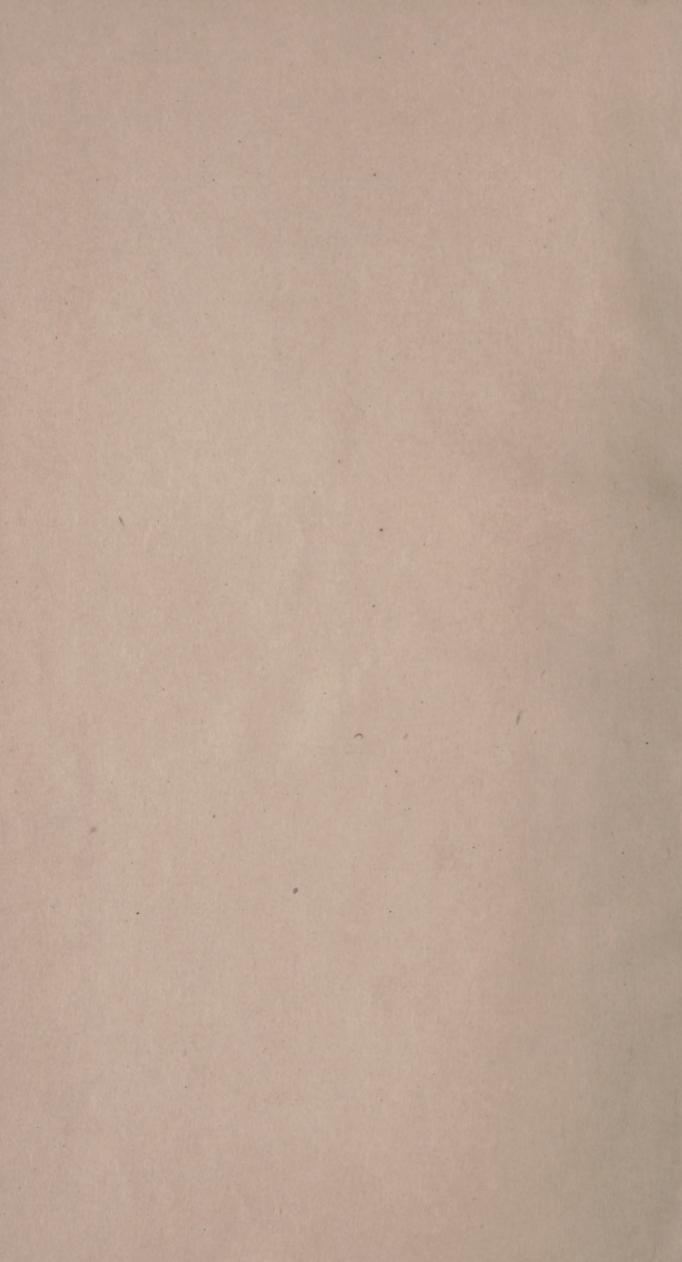
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HOW BALDY WON THE COUNTY SEAT

BY

CHARLES JOSIAH ADAMS

Author of "Where Is My Dog?" "The Matterhornhead," etc., etc.

SECOND EDITION

NEW YORK

J. S. OGILVIE PUBLISHING COMPANY

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PREFACE.

How Baldy Won the County Seat is the story of the adventures of a young clergyman and his horse, at the West of thirty years ago—a West which no longer exists—of which there should be some record.

I should write familiarly of this West, as I spent in it seventeen of the best years of my life—residing in its cities, riding over its deserts and plains, exploring its canyons, climbing its mountains, sleeping at its ranches, in its cabins, by its campfires, knowing, better than it may be thought that a clergyman should know, the men who made it so picturesque and so terrible—such men as, to mention but two, the original Buffalo Bill and Jesse James—rough men, but whiter than many, whom I have also known, who have fairly panted in their eagerness to paint them black.

It would be singular did I not have a rather clear notion of the sort of a clergyman who could do good at such a time, in such a region, among such men.

And the fact that I have, through the years, written so much in biophilism—or animal psychology—that the letters which I am constantly receiving from my friends, the editors, seem to intimate that they have no thought of my writing in any other line, may be sufficient evidence that I know a horse when I see one—though to the establishing of such a proposition I might add that in the old days it was irreverently said that I must have been born on horseback.

I have told the story because, when it arose in my mind, I thought it worth the telling.

But should any one, through reading it, be made more merciful to either a horse or a clergyman I shall be thankful.

CHARLES JOSIAH ADAMS.

St. Luke's Rectory,
Rossville, Staten Island, N. Y.
St. Peter's Day, 1902.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

I AM compelled to do so much purely conventional writing that in writing How Baldy Won the County Seat, without thought of convention—with no thought but that of allowing what was in my mind to express itself in its own way—I thoroughly enjoyed myself: which may be one of the reasons why the first edition went so quickly; for what one takes pleasure in doing is apt to give pleasure.

I have been agreeably disappointed in that not a single critic has spoken adversely of the way in which in so writing I did my work.

My fear was that what I thought its excellences might be considered defects.

One of these is the way in which I negatived the infinitive with to—by placing the not after the preposition in most cases, after the root in some.

The first of the former cases is at the bottom of page 9, where I say: "Disposed to not disturb his mother . . ."

That is exactly what I wanted to say, and not "Disposed not to disturb his mother . . ."

He was not disposed not to, but disposed to not. It should be remembered that the negative is as much a fact as the positive, and not simply the absence of the positive. A little attention to mathematics would make the average writer a better user of his mother tongue.

Then, in the regions both South and West, where I supposed the events of my story to occur, or remembered them as having occurred, the folk negative the form of the verb of which I speak as I negatived it in recording those events.

This is not strictly speaking, the splitting of the infinitive—of which I would not be understood as uttering disrespect; for, in common with a stick, when the infinitive will serve better split than intact it should be split.

The English is not an inflected language.

And what is the infinitive that one should break a commandment by getting on his knees to it?

I am not saying that in the negative of the infinitive with to the not should never precede the to.

The sound is sometimes more important than clearness—as in:

"To be or not to be?"

But here it is an abstract question of being, and not a question of someone's or something's being or not being this, that, or the other.

An example of placing the *not* after the root of the infinitive itself may be found on page 301—in: "His mother thought his beard to be *not* absolutely unbecoming."

That again is what I had in mind to say, and not: "His mother thought his beard not to be."

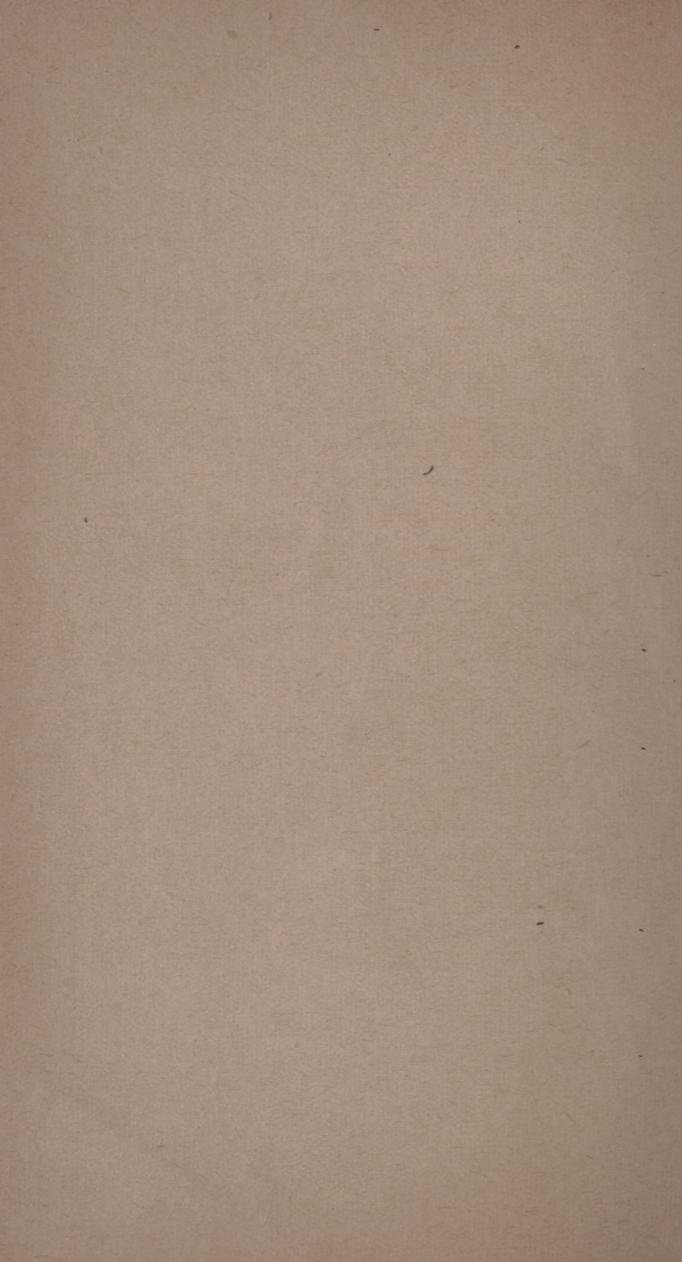
It would hurt no writer to devote himself to mathematics till he has a clear notion of the character and power of the negative.

And I wanted the positive to have a chance as well as the negative. So I correlated or rather than nor with neither.

Out of the past, through the decades, from the hard trail, over the wide reaches, on the rushing wind, come to me the hoof-beats of Baldy.—Were the paragraphs of How Baldy Won the County Seat as short, sharp, distinct, musical, rhythmical as they I would be satisfied.

CHARLES JOSIAH ADAMS.

XXIII Day in Lent, 1903.



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HOW BALDY WON THE COUNTY SEAT.

CHAPTER I.

THE FISTS AND THE CONSCIENCE.

I AM sorry to have it to record that during his seminary life Emory M. Emberson was fonder of football than of Hebrew, of boxing than of polemics. At the latter athletic exercise he excelled. He belonged to a number of gentlemen's clubs in various cities. He came to be one of the best amateur boxers in America. He once cut cleanly the lectures in pastoral theology for a whole month, because at the hour of those lectures he was defending—or holding himself ready to defend—the amateur boxing championship of the region east of the Rocky Mountains. He loved to box, and was always ready to meet whoever came. This was, of course, not known to the faculty.

That body might have known it; but the theologues were proud of the prowess and science of one of their number, and did not give him away, and no professor cared to be known as a reader of the sporting news. Those whom Emory had defeated were naturally not all anxious that he should defeat everyone else. When did human being ever succeed at anything without awakening jealousy in the hearts of some other human beings? From these feelings there was result. One day, at the club at which he defended-or stood on the alert to defend—the championship he was introduced to a man who did not appear to be exactly a gentleman. But that did not matter. Could he box? That was the only question in Emory's mind. Something was said about boxing-which was not to be wondered at, as boxing was about the only thing ever spoken of at this club. It was proposed that Emory and the stranger have a bout. Though Emory was somewhat surprised that nothing was said about the belt, he was perfectly willing to box with the stranger, as he would have been not only willing but anxious to do with any mortal man who might have appeared. He was noted in this regard. It had been said that he would not hesitate to stand up, with gloves or bare hands, before the Evil One himself.

"What weight gloves?" asked the stranger.
"It does not matter to me," answered Emory.
The lightest were chosen.

The combatants confronted each other. Only a few passes had been exchanged, when Emory saw what had been done. A prizefighter had been run in on him! Seeing this, many an amateur would have refused to continue the conflict, but Emory was not that sort of an amateur. The trick which had been played was despicable, but it had been played! He had fallen into the trap.

It must not be supposed that had Emory known that his opponent was a prizefighter before the sparring began he would have refused the contest. But in that case he would have known what he was undertaking, and would have acted more cautiously than he would naturally do in conflict with an amateur—one of his own class.

Then it is not pleasant for anyone to feel that he has been played with. This is especially true of one of the essential pride of an essential fighter, which Emory was in the most essential meaning of the word. His blood boiled—not so much against the man before him as against those who had introduced the man—though the man had allowed himself to be introduced. Then the man was there to be hit, and the tricksters were not! They were looking on. So the man whom he con-

fronted was to Emory not only himself—he symbolized others, against whom Emory's rage intensified as his war spirit rose. His teeth shut hard. He was an electric battery. He kept his head thoroughly. He acted on the defensive for two rounds. He did not allow all his skill, or all his strength to appear. The stranger became overconfident. In the third round Emory became aggressive. The stranger was surprised. The opportunity which Emory wanted presented itself. The stranger was struck at the side of the neck, and went down in a heap—limp as a rag. He did not come to for the next round.

There were probably seventy-five clubmen present. They gathered around the victor to congratulate him, but he said:

"No! Stand off! You have treated me scurvily! And you must pay for it!"

At this he jerked off his gloves and threw them to an attendant, saying quietly, but with a hiss in his voice:

"I have been boxing. I now propose to fight! You may come all at once, if you see fit! That would be cowardly, but in perfect keeping with your introducing a slugger to me—who is not in condition at the present moment to thank me, or to appreciate what I am about to say—which is, that in comparison with the best of you he is

of the highest lineage and culture. He fought fairly! I see that you are not disposed to come in a body. I don't greatly blame you! One or more of you would be very badly hurt! Now I have this proposition to make: I'll meet you three at a time till the whole crowd is thrashed, or I am."

At this moment a young fellow stepped forward and said:

"Emberson, you have been treated shabbily, but you must not think that we all had a hand in it! I didn't know that the bout was going to be—didn't come in till it was in progress. Then I saw what had been done. I was indignant, and my feeling is the feeling of all present but three. We know them, and we know why they have acted as they have. I shall see that they answer to the club. I know that I shall be numerously seconded in moving in that direction."

There was a murmur of assent from all—save the three. Their eyes fell under Emory's. The others frowned upon them. They retired during "three cheers and a tiger for Emberson"—proposed by the largest, oldest and most influential member. They tried afterwards to resign. That was not allowed.

It should be stated, however, that they were subsequently reinstated—through the influence of

Emory, one of whose characteristics was—as is always the case with a born fighter—that he could not hold spite—was magnanimous even to those who did not deserve his magnanimity.

He was also conscientious. He remembered the frame of mind in which he delivered the knock-out blow. At that moment he was angry at the whole club—not knowing that only three of its members were in the conspiracy against him. When he struck the man it was with the disposition to annihilate. He knew that such a disposition could not long have remained in his mind. He was fully aware that it was utterly impossible for him, at any time, or under any circumstances, with malice aforethought, to injure anyone seriously—much less to take, in such spirit, the life of a fellow creature.

"But," he asked himself, "when one strikes another in an anger which is murderous, or even in carelessness of what the result of the blow may be, and the stroke results in death, is not the striker a murderer? And suppose the one smitten does not die, is not the one who delivers such a blow as I have imagined—such a blow as I delivered, in fact, subjectively a murderer—a murderer at the bar of his own conscience, and in the sight of God, though the law of man may not lay hold of him? And is one who can yield

to such a passion as that which governed me in that bout fit to be a clergyman?"

The bout occurred a few weeks before the final examinations for graduation. It was all that Emory could do to keep himself from going away at once. He would have done so had it not been for his mother. He knew that such action upon his part would give her great pain. Then he wanted to remain in the city where the seminary was situated, during the convalescence of the stranger. He had to do something to keep the question whether he was a homicide in intent from driving him wild. So he devoted himself to preparing for the examinations. There was need that he do a deal of cramming. One cannot do the boxing necessary to the defense of a belt and keep in training that the defense may have a show of being successful without neglecting things which are commonly held to be of more importance. Examination week came. To his surprise, to the wonder of his friends, to the astonishment of the faculty, he graduated with honors. But he had entered the ring with Hebrew as he had with the stranger—resolved to do the knocking out.

This graduation involved his being ordained deacon. Had it involved his being priested, I doubt if he could have brought himself to graduate. But he knew enough of ecclesiastical his-

tory to be aware that the deacon, at least theoretically, has to do with the temporalities rather than with the spiritualities of the church—that the diaconate is the business order of the threefold ministry. If he was morally capable to conduct a grocery store, or the business department of a newspaper, why was he not, in the same regard, capable of attending to the materialities of a church? Then as a deacon there would be no obligation upon him to connect himself with a church clerically. Many deacons were in law, literature, journalism, trade.

So he became a deacon, and—his mother was happy.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE SORT OF STUFF FOR A CLERGYMAN?

That he might not be out of the fashion, Emory, at the opening of the week before his graduation, ordered a clerical suit, which he wore at the commencement exercises, and at the service immediately following, in the course of which he was ordained deacon.

Then he took it off, and did not have it on again for three years—save once—upon the first day of a fortnight's visit to his mother—to whom he went immediately at the closing of his life at university.

He reached Fordville, his home town, by river steamboat, at about two o'clock in the morning—the boat being late—as boats, and other means of conveyance, are apt to be at the South—the region to which he belonged—the ways of which region, by the way, were not unpleasant to him after some years at the North.

Disposed to not disturb* his mother, or the

^{*}See Preface to Second Edition—if interested in questions of grammatical forms.

household, he went to an hotel, at which he had stopped now and again through the years, and at which, in his boyhood, he had done much more lounging than his mother had thought to be good for him. He knew that this hotel was not open over night. He knew, also, that the porter was accustomed to being occasionally routed out by a patron from the chronically belated boat.

The porter knew him, and yawningly greeted him. In common with everybody in the town, this porter knew all about everybody else. He assured Emory that his mother was well. This assurance put his mind at rest. He had no specific reason for anxiety in the regard of his mother. But he has a keen imagination, which gives him a great deal of pleasure at times, but which oftener gives him a great deal of pain. Some pre-natal influence has placed a frown upon its brows rather than a smile upon its lips. One of its ways is to suggest whenever he turns his face homewards all manner of horrible things which may have occurred in his absence.

When he descended to the office, the next morning, he was in clericals, reversed collar and all.

The clerk, a hulking fellow, whom he had known all his life, some years older than he—a fighter of more than local renown, his reputation

having spread over two or three counties—exclaimed:

"Hello, Em!" then regarding the clericals, with a mock bow, and a sneer:

"Beg your pardon-your reverence!"

"No need o' that, Ike!" said Emory, drily. "The clothes don't make the man! Let me be Em to you! Pay no attention to how I may be dressed!" and walked to a front window, and looked out on the street.

The tone of this reply irritated Ike, and the irritation was none the less because of a laugh which came from half a dozen guests and some loafers who sat about.

At the bottom of the embrasure of the window—the walls were of stone and thick—lay a set of boxing gloves. Absent-mindedly, Emory picked up one of these, smiled at its bumpiness, and pulled it on.

Having closed and opened his hand two or three times, he began to pull it off, thinking of how offensive its stiffness would be to some of the members of some of the clubs to which he belonged.

But before the pulling off was accomplished, Ike stepped from behind his counter, saying:

"No, you don't! One of the rules of this establishment is that when a fellow puts on a glove he must use it before he takes it off!" These words were accompanied by a smile, which was said to be always on Ike's lips on the eve of a fight.

With a good-natured grin, Emory replied:

"Just as you please, Ike! But you wouldn't want to hurt a clergyman, would you?"

Ike answered: "Oh,—the clergyman part of it! But you are not a clergyman to me—especially after what you said a little bit ago. You are only Em Emberson. For this you may be thankful; for if I considered you a clergyman I might hit all the harder!"

"Very well!" answered Emory, with a smile not unlike Ike's, readjusting the glove promptly, and drawing on its mate.

Ike pulled the other pair on, spitefully. It was evident that he was in a rough-and-tumble mood. He and Emory had always been great friends. But he was one of those men who hate elergymen, simply because they are clergymen—who look upon clergymen as a worthless class—old women in trousers. Up to this, clergymen had always, wisely, no doubt, taken his open, or implied insults meekly. He would teach his old friend, grown into what he despised, a lesson.

He did not pronounce the word, "Ready!" or wait for it to be pronounced. He was not so ignorant as to not know the rules of boxing. The

promptness with which his challenge was accepted may have driven the thought of rules from his mind. The probabilities, however, are that he was under the power of the habit of rough-andtumble fighting, in which he had engaged for so many years, and in which he was so justly celebrated. Before Emory's guard was up, he was struck a stinging blow on the ear. He was dazed for a moment. But for only a moment. The next thing of which those who were about were aware was Ike's turning a half somersault in the air, and coming to the stone flooring on his head and shoulders. He had gone cleanly over a chair. He was not hurt. That is, his hurts were not such as a rough-and-tumble fighter would think of giving attention. But he was greatly surprised. He got up slowly, looked dully at Emory for a moment, his hands hanging loosely at his sides, then, deliberately removing his gloves, said, absently:

"I'm no hog! I know when I've had enough! But how in thunder'd you do it, Em?"

Emory did not remain at the hotel for break-fast.

His mother greeted him quietly, but very tenderly. Then she sat feasting her eyes on him. Finally she said:

"How much you do remind me of your father,

in your clericals! He never disgraced them! I hope you never may!"

"That I may not, I guess I'd better take them

off!" Emory replied, with a laugh.

"Why?"—a little anxiously.

He told her of his experience that morning with Ike Sterling.

The mother said:

"The action was scarcely clerical, Emory; but I do not see how you could well have done otherwise. I could not easily endure having a coward for a son. Isaac Sterling belongs to a good family. I knew his father and mother well. Each of them was of good descent. The father's father's father—"

But I shall spare the reader Ike Sterling's pedigree. Mrs. Emberson, in common with all Southern people of old family, was a great believer in family, and in its saving influence on its members to the latest generation. When she was through with the pedigree—which Emory knew thoroughly already, as he did that of every one of whom he had heard his mother speak much, and he had heard her speak of Ike a great deal in past years, for she had warned him more against this same Ike than against any one else in the community, knowing the influence that such a chronic fighter would be certain to have on a boy of Emory's

nature—when, I say, she was through with the pedigree, Mrs. Emberson added, with the light of admiration in her eyes:

"It may be that your knocking Isaac over will do him good. Let us hope it may! And it seems to me that there are occasions when even a clergyman should not forget that he is a man, but remember it emphatically! For instance, were I a man—even a clergyman—I would take the measures necessary to stop the tongue of the speaker, in case I should hear a woman maligned!"

This was a favorite theme with Mrs. Emberson. When she got thoroughly started on it, she did not know when to stop. This came of the fact that, soon after she was married and moved into the rectory in a strange place, a young woman of that community had been driven to suicide by tittle-tattle, which had originated in a remark made by a loafer of gentle extraction to loafers of gentle extraction as she was passing a place where loafers of gentle extraction were wont to congregate. The remark would not have been made had the young woman had a natural protector. Mrs. Emberson then vowed that if she ever had a son she would so rear him that he would be a protector of females. And she had kept her word.

To cut her off from this theme, Emory said: "Yes, mother, I know. And I haven't for-

gotten the advice you gave me when I went away to school. Do you remember? You called me to your room, and told me that you did not believe in shooting and cutting—that you thought there was too much of those things in the South. Then you told me that God had given me two hands and so formed and attached them that I could make fists and strike with them. You, if I am not mistaken, went so far as to advise me to go to a master and learn how to defend myself and injure the enemy with these natural weapons!"

The mother shook her head smilingly.

"You have forgotten," said Emory, with mock seriousness, "but I have not! And I have profited fairly well by your advice."

All of the first day of his visit home Emory spent with his mother. She told him much of what had occurred during his absence. His attention was taken most fully by the relation of how misfortune had overtaken one of the oldest and most influential families of a neighboring county. This had made it necessary that a young lady, sufficiently connected with that family to be considered a member of it, should do something for her own support. She had a maternal uncle in Fordville. Through his influence, together with that of Mrs. Emberson, she had procured the Fordville school. All had gone well with her till

she had been compelled to punish the unruly son of a miner—coal having been discovered in the region and many rough people having been brought into the community to dig and handle it. The boy was so big and lusty that the teacher could not have hurt him much had she been so disposed, which she was not; for she was one of the gentlest little creatures living. But there was the natural enmity upon the part of the newcomers against the old inhabitants—for which there was not lack of irritation in the contempt with which the old inhabitants treated the newcomers. The young lady was, consequently, being most unmercifully talked about.

The next morning Emory came down without his clericals—in a somewhat worn street suit. The mother wanted to know the reason for this change. Emory replied, with a laugh, that it was in the line of her expressed hope that he might not disgrace his clericals, adding:

"I have had something like a fight in them already. Were I to have a real fight in them my clerical prospects would probably be ruined. As it is, I hope that an account of my escapade with Ike Sterling may not come to the ears of the Bishop!"

The mother laughed:

"I hope you haven't a fight in prospect."

Emory laughed back: "No."

Then he happened to think of what the mother had told him about the young lady's punishing the boy, of the talk it had occasioned, and added:

"But I may have to defend the reputation of a schoolmarm!" with no thought that there was the slightest probability of such a complication before him.

The mother smiled, and said: "In such a case, I have no doubt that you would do it promptly and emphatically!"

On that day, and on every day thereafter while he was at home, Emory was out and about. He knew everybody, everybody knew him. He was a born aristocrat in that there was no one from whom he was out of sympathy. He would sit and talk with Bob McDonald, the shoemaker, or Mr. Shad, the grocer, as unconscious of self as he was when he was in conversation with the Judge of the County Court, the Rector, or the Bishopenjoying intercourse with one of the latter no more than he did with either of the former-excepting that his faculties might be brought into more active play in one case than in the other. But of this he was not certain; for, while the Judge, or the Rector, or the Bishop might know more about some things than the shoemaker or

the grocer, the shoemaker or the grocer might know more about some other things than the Judge, the Rector or the Bishop. And Emory had a vague suspicion that the things of every-day life and interest would be of as great importance - to him as a clergyman, as jurisprudence, history, or even theology. Then to his mind the acquisition of facts and theories is not the most important result of social relations. Though a very young man, he had come to see that there is a soul of the community, some of the strength of which must come into the soul of the individual, or it is weak indeed. He had had indistinct wonderings if that might not be one of the truths involved in: "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another." But I may be putting speculations—or discoveries—in his mind that were not there till many years later. The fact is that he was of a social nature, and liked a human being—to say nothing of other beings now—as spontaneously as the sun shines.

One of his favorites was Jim Shelby, the blacksmith. He would sit in the shade of Jim's shop, and, as Jim said, "gab" with him by the hour about anything or nothing, but especially about local politics, in which Jim was always interested, in which he was as well informed as the Judge was in law, the Rector in ecclesiastical history, or the Bishop in theology.

One day Jim said, in his deep, round voice:

"Em, you've made a mistake!"

"In what?" asked Emory.

"In startin' in to be a minister."

"Why?"

"'Cause you ha'n't cut out for one! You'll set 'round and smoke an' gab with me. You treat everybody as y'r ekal. You won't stand no non-sense. You ha'n't got enough pretendin' about you. You ha'n't offish enough for a minister o' th' gospil!"

The very next day Emory stepped into Mr. Shad's store for a stogy. He was a regular Southerner in his openhandedness. There was a crowd in the store. He passed the box of stogies about. An immense rough fellow, who was sitting on the counter, took two. As he did so, he made a remark, in the general conversation which was going on, bringing in the name of Miss East, the school teacher, which revealed that he was the father of the boy who, probably—taking the father into the account—could hardly, on general principles, have received the punishment that he deserved from the hands of a female. The remark it is not necessary to record. It was one of those observations which come to the surface when

the mud at the bottom of almost any community is stirred—a verbal bubble charged with foul gas.

Emory looked hard at the fellow when he took two stogies. The battery was charged. The remark surcharged it. An impudent look from the speaker set it off. Emory said:

"Your head should be broken!"

The man sprang from the counter. But he did not reach the floor on his feet. The part of his anatomy which first touched was the back of his When he came to consciousness of what head. had happened, he lay on the broad of his back, in the saliva with which the chewers had liberally covered the planks. Emory had struck him in the course of his passage from the counter. His companions first laughed, then frowned. Emory had struck-not only the individual, but also the class. The members of that class present made for him. The box, with its contents, was crushed. Emory would have been crushed as well had it not been for Ike Sterling and Jim Shelby, who were passing, and stepped in to see what was the row.

Though Emory said nothing to her about it, the action of her son in this case came to the ears of Mrs. Emberson. She kissed him and wept over him, saying:

"My training has not been in vain. I have now somebody to do for me what I cannot do myself—

punish those who say unwarranted things about women!"

Emory said, laughingly:

"It's fortunate, mother, that I hadn't on my clericals!"

The mother's form straightened and her eyes flashed, as she said:

"You do not suppose that any right-minded person could think that you could have disgraced your clericals by such action? It would have—honored—I came near saying sanctified—them! It would not have disgraced the surplice and stole had you been in priestly vestment!"

It is not hard to see where Emory got his knightly disposition! He replied:

"I hope the Rector and the Bishop may see things as you do!"

But they did not.

Though Emory was not deposed from the diaconate, he was under a cloud. He was looked upon as a rash young man. Still his family was of great influence in the diocese and in the parish. There was a consultation between the Rector and the Bishop, and the former took him as a sort of assistant. I say a sort of assistant advisedly. It was understood that he was to not wear his clericals—he wanting to not do so, and the Rector desiring that they might not run the risk of being—

as he saw things-disgraced. The result was that Emory was looked upon as neither clergyman or layman. He grew restless. He had had some experience as a writer. He made up his mind to make an attempt to get into journalism. Going to New York, he finally succeeded in getting engagement as a reporter. He rose rapidly. But a restlessness was upon him. This prevented him from devoting himself to any department of journalism. It grew till he could stay with no paper. It increased till he could remain in no city. In the course of three years he had worked in nearly every considerable city in America, in many inconsiderable ones, and on so many papers that it was with difficulty that he could recall the names of some of them.

At the end of this time he had distinguished himself as a reporter of reckless daring. He would tackle anybody or anything. A rough named Morley had terrorized a Western community. Emory appeared in that community. The rough did a peculiarly wicked and cruel thing. The city editor asked the assembled reporters for a volunteer to write up the affair. Emory volunteered. The other reporters tried to dissuade him from the undertaking. There was more danger both in gathering the facts and in

publishing them than the average man cared to face.

A few days after the story appeared he was met on the street by a man, who said:

"I wouldn't have written what you've written about Morley for this city and all of its wealth!"

"Why?"

"He'll kill you!"

"Tell him," answered Emory, "that I simply did my duty to the paper which employs me, and to the community of which I am for the time being a member. Tell him, too, that I would be a fool did I not go ready to take care of myself under all circumstances!"

"Why do you tell me to tell him?"

"Because, I take it, you wouldn't have gone to the trouble to warn me without an understanding with him!"

The man turned away. Emory concluded afterwards that his words had been repeated to Morley—so concluded from the following circumstances. A reporter had taken to drink. Emory was trying to save him; for he was a likable fellow; then Emory never forgot, though he never said anything about it, that he was in deacon's orders, and always had in mind the doing of a little good, an opportunity presenting itself naturally—realizing that the forcing of an opportunity

would bring upon him the sneers of the class with which fortune had cast him—newspaper folk being the most cynical of all respectable people.

He traced the erring reporter to Morley's, the worst dive in the city. The place reached, he did not hesitate. He went in.

He found the man for whom he was looking in a large room, in which there were both billiard and card tables, in a poker game. He said:

"Come, Mac!"

"Won' do't!" Mac replied.

"All right!" said Emory, knowing his man, "I've done all I can. Go right on! Drink yourself to death! The sooner you're gone the better for you and your friends!" and turned away.

"Jis' wait a min't. Soon's I win this pot!"

"Very well!" answered Emory, crossing the room and leaning against a cue rack.

As he stood there Morley came in, marched up to him threateningly, and asked roughly:

"What you doin' here?"

"After some of your work!" replied Emory.

Mr. Morley's powers of repartee being not brilliant, he replied:

"You git out o' here!" With this he moved towards Emory. Emory reached back and drew forward sufficiently for the gaslight to glitter on it, the handle of a hairbrush, ivory-mounted, which he happened to have in his pocket.

Happened to have? He was passing through his "hair-oil days," as the expression went, over a quarter of a century ago, and he took great care of his long, slightly-waving, dark locks.

At the sight of the brush handle Morley stopped short. Emory smiled. His bluff had worked. Morley evidently thought that the reporter was ready "to take care of himself." He turned and went away.

When, a little later, Emory passed with Mac through the barroom, which was in front of the card and billiard room, Morley called out to him:

"Come, old man, and have a drink!"

"No, thank you; but I'll take a cigar."

Morley was Emory's sworn friend from that moment.

In another city a desperado, who was also a barber, threatened to take Emory's life for something which he had written. Needing a shave, Emory went in and took that barber's chair.

The barber was dumbfounded. But he performed his office carefully. He drew no blood.

Emory was a dashing fellow, and set the fashion for the set which he joined wherever he went. In this city there was a young man of about his height and build who was said to resemble him

and who followed his lead in dress closely, as well as in manner and walk. This young man was waylaid and the life nearly beaten out of him. It was thought that he was a victim to the misfortune of being so nearly a double and his power of imitation.

During his prostration and convalescence the poor fellow would have suffered privation had it not been that Emory collected money for and contributed himself as heavily as he could to his needs.

In these reportorial days of her son, Mrs. Emberson was made very happy by a report which went the rounds of the papers—to the effect that he had punished a man of standing, the man of standing having made a slighting remark about a woman who was passing a club window, in which Emory was sitting with him.

CHAPTER III.

EMORY VISITS THE BISHOP.

THE last bit of reporting that Emory did was the writing up of the opening to settlement of the new Southwest, as the region lying south of Whackston, east of the Quicksand, which had been purchased from the Osage Indians by the Government, was called, of which the most important portion is the Butternut Valley.

This was done soon after he had made one of his too frequent changes, and so well done that it distinguished him upon the paper with which he had so recently engaged.

That was sufficient reason for him to take flight.

To that end, he had gone to the treasurer to draw the small amount which was due him, when he was handed a letter.

The scratchy old-fashioned hand of the address surprised him greatly. There was only one

man living who could write so abominably—the Bishop.

In handing the letter, the treasurer smiled. Emory glanced at the address again, and also smiled. Though he had never consciously done anything which, in his opinion, should have been considered unworthy of "the cloth," his language and actions, in his intercourse with "the staff" had not always been those which are conventionally expected of a clergyman.

They would not have been conventional had he let it be known that he was a deacon; but in that case they might have been somewhat different.

What had caused the treasurer first and then Emory to smile were the titles of the address:

"The Rev. E. M. Emberson, B.D.

Since he had been in journalism Emory had not heard from the Bishop. Having been silent so long, why should he write now? There was another surprise for Emory. When he opened the envelope there fell out a draft for one hundred dollars. His first thought was that something must have happened to his mother—an accident, illness, maybe death. It may easily be imagined—taking into account the disposition of his imagination to terture him—with what a

trembling hand he unfolded the letter. He was so pale that the treasurer said:

"Steady, old man!"

But the first sentence was reassuring. It ran in the Bishop's formal style:

"Through your esteemed mother—whom I am glad to be able to report as being in excellent health—I have obtained your address, and write to ask you to come to me as soon as you conveniently can."

The letter went on:

"I am an old man. There is no telling when the Master may call me. I am not sure that I may not have done you an injustice. If so, I would like to make amends before I 'go hence to be no more seen.' Since I saw you a change has been wrought in my mind. This may be because I am in the edge of the shadow which is perceptibly deepening, because I am aware of the sinking of my path into the valley, and because a dear child-my granddaughter-but I cannot write about that! Then the use of the pen has come to be painful to me. You will do me a favor by dropping a line to me by the return post, telling me when I may hope to see you. I am sending you a draft. Use the money which it will place in your hands freely. It justly belonged to your father."

The treasurer assisted in cashing the draft. Emory's luggage was light, and he already had it ready for flitting; so in another hour he was aboard an express train, which was pulling out, his face homeward.

Two evenings later he was sitting with his mother.

Her hair was a little grayer than when he last saw her, and there may have been a few more wrinkles in her strong, kindly face. But otherwise she was unchanged. She regarded her son with an anxious pride. The anxiety expressed itself in a question:

"Emory, when are you going to settle down?" He replied by asking:

"Did I leave my clericals here?"

"Yes," the mother replied, with a smile of thankfulness to Someone, "they are in the wardrobe in your room."

Emory arose and walked to a door. The mother heard him ascending a stairway from the front hall, into which the door opened.

In a short time he came down and re-entered the sitting-room. He was in full clerical attire. The mother's face glowed with an expression of the deepest pleasure. He walked to her chair, bent over her, kissed her, and said:

"Now, mother, I'm settled!"

She threw her arms about his neck, wept quietly for a little, then sighed:

"My prayers are answered!"

And the subject was not further referred to by the mother or the son.

The next morning, Uncle Dave, who had been Emory's grandfather's coachman for half a century, and who now, as straight as an arrow, was Emory's mother's stableman, saddled a lithe and powerful bay running mare. She was no longer young, but she was still the best saddle-mare in the county. Emory, when a boy, had ridden her in many a race—he having been stolen away from his mother, by an uncle, who was a turfman, for that purpose, and she had always been his favorite mount.

Though Nellie had not seen him since he went away to take up the lead pencil, she whinnied gladly at his approach. He rubbed her nose, patted her neck, stroked her mane, and, pronouncing her name lovingly, vaulted into the saddle. She curvetted and frolicked about. Uncle Dave yah-yahed and exclaimed:

"De ole gal knows you, Massa Em!"

Emory rode to the hotel, hallooed, and Ike Sterling rushed out to take his hand, saying:

"Glad to see you, E-Mr. Emberson!"-the

change in appellation accompanied by a good-natured laugh.

"Em will do!" was the laughing answer.

Ike, grinning, shook his head with:

"I never fool with lightnin' but once!"

The next place at which Emory drew rein was the blacksmith shop. As he galloped up, Jim Shelby came out, wiping his right hand on his leathern apron, and crying:

"Hello, Em! Where'd you drop from? Th' old mare's frisky this mornin'! An' she ha'n't th' on'y one glad to see you in these parts, neither, be sure o' that!"

From the blacksmith shop Emory rode to Mr. Shad's. Knowing that the grocer was growing old, Emory dismounted in front of his store and walked in. It being somewhat dim within, Mr. Shad did not recognize his visitor at oncelooked inquiringly over his glasses till he caught a smile. Then he let go the paper in which he was tying up some pounds of sugar, hurried around the end of the counter, and sputtered, in a hearty way that he had:

"Well, well, my boy, how are you! Haven't seen you for—let me see!"

Emory aided him to recollect.

Mr. Shad added:

"So long as that! Yes! How time does fly!

And you youngsters keep better track of it than we old fellows!"

After a moment Emory said:

"I've come in to pay you what I owe you, Mr. Shad!"

"What you owe me!" was Mr. Shad's half question, half exclamation of confusion, at the remark.

"Yes! Do you not remember that the last time you were in the act of selling me a smoke a hundred or so stogies were smashed?"

Mr. Shad replied, earnestly:

"You don't owe me a cent! But I owe you something! The young lady whose reputation you were protecting when the stogies were destroyed is, as you may know, through her mother, a niece of mine. She has changed her name—much to your mother's disliking, who, counting everyone's descent through the father, thinks that Miss East has married beneath her. But she has married an honest and industrious young man; and she is fond of him. I would like to have you call upon them."

"I should be glad to do so!"

"She owes you her thanks. Your striking the miner changed the drift of opinion in her favor, and drew to her the attention of the good man who is now her husband. He—for she is a good girl—owes you thanks as well as she. I

have heard them both say many times that they would be glad of a chance to pay them. And I owe you this!"

As Mr. Shad had spoken he had passed behind the counter, reached to a shelf and taken down a box of Havana stogies, which he now handed to Emory.

Emory saw that refusal of the gift would give his old friend pain. So he opened the box, took out a handful of its contents—which are darker and smoother than the ordinary stogies—handed it back, requesting that it be kept till he should call, or send Uncle Dave for it, went out, remounted and rode away.

He was both a natural and a trained horseman. He sat erectly and proudly. He was a lover of animals. Between him and his mount there was sympathy. His pride of affectionate mastery descended into the horse. The horse's strength and affectionate obedience ascended into him. As he rode out of the village that morning, everybody who saw him looked, and turned, hurried to a window, or took other trouble, to look again, because everybody knew him and Nellie, liked him and had not seen him for years; but not only because of these things; he and Nellie made a picture to be remembered.

He was out, not simply for pleasure, but, also,

to call upon the Bishop, whose See City was a dozen miles away.

The venerable old man greeted him with a pleasure in which there was an element which seemed to be not of this world.

He said:

"Your note telling me of your kind concession to my request"-which note, by the way, Emory had found time to drop in a box on his way to the train which had brought him over the first stage of his journey home, having written it while a porter was bringing down his traps at the hotel which he was leaving-"your note was a relief to me. I feared that you might not come—that you might feel that I had treated you so unjustly that you could not forgive me. I grow less conventional as I approach the end. I was simply an ecclesiast when I condemned your striking the man who maligned the young woman who had no kinsman who was capable of defending her. I am more than an ecclesiast now. The rochet and the crosier, and the other insignia of my office, used to mean a great deal to me. I still see their importance as symbols of that authority without which a diocese can no more succeed than can an army without the authority invested in the general, than can the human body, save in some primary regards, fulfill its functions without the ex-

istence and activity of the will. I am fully aware that when the symbols of authority disappear the authority itself is apt to be not recognized. But the symbols of the Episcopacy, in and of themselves, are nothing to me any more. I used-as your father, were he still in the flesh, would tell you-to value highly the place of Episcopal honor in the procession and in the sanctuary. But now I would rather lead than follow in the procession, because the leading would bring me nearer the cross; I would rather kneel at the front of the altar than sit on the throne. I have come to the conclusion that you were right in striking the brutal fellow who was aspersing the reputation of a defenseless woman. I should have made it a reason for advancing you instead of holding it an obstacle in your way. Will you forgive me?"

"My dear Bishop!" exclaimed Emory, brokenly, finding it hard to keep back the tears. "Forgive you! I was not fit to be a clergyman then. I am not fit to be one now. The idea of a deacon's forgiving a Bishop, and a deacon, at that, who has for three years been leading the life of a reporter!"

The old man said, with emotion:

"It is not a question between Bishop and deacon, but between man and man! In my official pride, I condemned, and prevented from serving the church, a young man for doing what I see now to have been a Christian duty. The Christ, when He purified the temple, and when He verbally struck the pharisees, did essentially what you did when you struck the one who was so foul of mouth."

The good man paused for a moment, then, having mastered himself, went on:

"A few months ago, I followed a dear child to the grave. She died of a broken heart. She was as pure as the morning. But the devil—in the shape of a man, a so-called gentleman—because he could not ruin her in one way—I know the facts in the case!——"

The hard look came into Emory's face—the look which the man of high standing saw when he was taught that even a man of high standing must be careful as to what he says in relation to a woman who passes the window of his club—the hard look came into Emory's face, and he asked:

"Why didn't you send for me then, Bishop?"

The Bishop smiled sadly, the old habit of thought came back to him, and he replied:

"The clergyman should be a man of peace!"
But he immediately added:

"Yet, old man though I am—but let that go!—she is now where only the truth can be told! I am not glad that you came that I may tell you

about her, and what her experience cost me in sorrow and indignation. I want to make a reparation. As what would be probably the last official act of my life, I would like to advance you to the priesthood. Then I desire to make a confession to you. You wondered, no doubt, at receiving a draft from me. Before I satisfy your curiosity take this!"

He pushed across the table between them a bit of paper. At this Emory glanced, and looked up with wide eyes. He had wondered when he received the draft for a hundred dollars. But here was a surprise indeed! The bit of paper was a check for considerably over a thousand dollars.

With lowered eyes and flushed face, the Bishop continued:

"The confession is this: Your father was a man of large intellectual endowments, of great learning, of wonderful eloquence, but of a gentle and submissive character—a"—with a humorous smile—"in the last respect, of course, very different man from his son. You are an illustration of what seems to be a fact, that the son is more apt to be like the mother than like the father. Anybody who knows you can hardly doubt that you will never submit to a wrong without vigorous protest. That very thing your father did. And I, his Bishop, am the man who wronged him!"

"How?" asked Emory, his eyes narrowing and his lips stiffening.

"Be patient!" responded the Bishop, somewhat sternly, "and I will tell you! What is represented by the draft which I sent you and the check which I have just given you is an amount of money which was justly coming to your father."

"Oh, only a matter of money!" said Emory with relief.

"Yes," said the Bishop, "but I wronged him! He had earned the money. I withheld it from him on a quibble."

"Take it back," said Emory, "and say nothing more about it!"

"No," was the answer; "you must keep it! I beg of you to allow me that easing of my conscience!"

The request was something like a prayer.

Emory put the check in his pocket and rose to go.

"Would you not like to be priested?" the Bishop asked.

"Yes."

"Will you allow me to priest you?"

In the tone in which this question was asked there was again the hint of a prayer.

"Yes."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DOG-SERMON.

Fordville had an oldest inhabitant, who may have enjoyed that distinction because of his good habits, among which was that of going to church. He did not remember seeing a larger congregation in St. Luke than that which assembled to see Emory priested.

The members of the family were there in force, of course. The same was true of the friends of the family. It was also true of Emory's personal friends. And a priesting was not of sufficiently frequent occurrence to not attract the curious.

Ike Sterling and Jim Shelby—the latter in a brand-new suit of broadcloth, in which he did not seem very comfortable—were in conspicuous places, in accordance with an arrangement which Emory had personally made. Mr. Shad was not absent—though he sat still during all of the pro-

ceedings, in a fear that did he attempt to follow them he would make a mistake, and, possibly, he being a Methodist, as a mild protest against ritual. Scattered through the assembly were a number of miners, notably Sandy Tom—whom Emory had taken on the wing, so to speak, between the counter and the floor in Mr. Shad's store.

The ceremony over, Emory found most of the congregation waiting for him in the church, in the vestibule and on the sward in the churchyard—many of them anxious to see him, out of a curiosity as to whether his elevation had made any difference in his appearance, if they accounted to themselves for their curiosity, which is not likely; some to take him by the hand, congratulate him and wish him prosperity; a few to give him advice.

Said Ike Sterling:

"If you're as successful in knocking out the world, the flesh and the devil as you were once in knocking me out, Em, you will be the most successful clergyman of the century!"

Emory laughed:

"The fact that I knocked them out in combination would seem to suggest that I would not have much difficulty in knocking either of them out did I happen to meet it, or him alone!"

Jim Shelby, who heard this retort, laughed,

frowned, shook his head, said to Ike: "I fear he'll al'ays be the same Em!" took Emory aside, and said to him:

"You're too natr'al!-I'm a plain man. I know suthin' 'bout poundin' iron, shoein' hosses, and talkin' politics, but I ha'n't much on talkin' religion! By settin' 'round and gabbin' to meor lettin' me gab, throwin' in a word now and then-you've done me a dam-I beg your pardon! -you've done me more good than you'd a' done in bein' offish wi' me. But thet ha'n't the question! I want you to succeed! I want you to be a Bishop! And you can on'y get on as a parson by bein' diff'ent! You musn't smoke-in public! You musn't set 'roun' an' tell stories-no matter how interestin', inn'cent and well told they may be. You've never told stories 'at hadn't ought t' be told! You mustn't be a man! When a feller swears in your presence you must look horrified—even 'f you think 'at the sitiation justifies the strength o' the observation! Do y'r smokin' 'hind th' door, an' eat coffee to kill y'r breath! I'd like t' 'ave you al'ays jist as you are, you know thet! No man can be liked 's much 's I like you an' not know it! Y'r open ways 'ill save more fellers like me. But we don't count! As I said afore, I want you t' be a Bishop! And thet you can't be 'f you ha'n't a kind o' hypocrite!

Mind what I say, my boy! 'F you don't, you'll regret 't!"

And away good, whole-souled Jim Shelby went, leaving in Emory's mind the question whether he wanted to succeed, according to the common standard, at the price that had been suggested. Was the occupancy of a fat rectorate, or the attainment of a bishopric as desirable as the reaching and helping such men as Jim Shelby?

Jim—who had drawn Emory to the side of the church, and spoken in a low tone—was but gone when the miner who has been specified came up awkwardly and said:

"I was a-wonderin', sir, hif you'd haccept my congratulations?"

"Certainly!" answered Emory. "Why shouldn't I?"

"Hafter you—hafter hour trouble," the miner then said, "I done a good bit o' thinkin'! I 'ave daughters o' my hown. And the man 'at said the thing habout one o' them 'at I said habout the schoolmarm would 'ave to square haccounts with me! As to the boy, I 'ave found that 'e deserved a good deal more 'n 'e got!"

"Let us drop that!" said Emory. "I'm going to preach on next Sunday. As I have never preached but two or three times, you will not hear much, but will you come?"

"Hi will, sir, though hit'll be the second time Hi've been in church since Hi've been in Hamerica—countin' to-day!"

And the miner stepped aside to make room for Mr. Shad, who approached with a grin, saying:

"I'm sorry, Emory, that you'll have to pull in so much harness. I'd a good deal rather have you a Methodist! But I hope that you may be enabled to do some effective pulling for the right in 'this naughty world,' as I believe one of your printed prayers says. That's a good way to put it, even if the prayer is called a collect and is in a book, for this is, indeed a 'naughty world,' and it is needed that we all do what pulling we can in the hope of getting it out of the slough! I know something about you, Emory. You have a free hand when it is open, and a ready one when it is clenched. And your tongue will be quick enough -no doubt about that! But the harness!-that's what fills me with fear. Don't forget, my boy, that pulling the load is more important than the harness in which the pulling is done!"

"Thank you, Mr. Shad," said Emory with a smile, but seriously. "I shall try to remember your injunction!"

At this point Emory's mother, whom he had already seen in the sacristy, after coming from the church, came up and said:

"Emory, here is a lady who would like very much to know you. Allow me to present Mrs. Stumblesome."

Emory bowed to a small, plump, very pretty young matron, who said, with an attractive blush:

"I have asked your mother to present me to you, Mr. Emberson, that I may thank you for a great service which you once rendered me—for which I would have thanked you immediately after its rendering had I not been prostrated."

Emory was puzzled.

Seeing this, Mrs. Stumblesome added:

"When I was Miss East."

"Oh!" exclaimed Emory. "But you needn't thank me! I thoroughly enjoyed what I did upon the occasion to which you refer. I do not know whether I am a high, or a low, or a broad churchman, but there is one thing quite certain, and that is that I belong to the church militant. If I only enjoy preaching, and parish work, and ministering the sacraments as much as I have always enjoyed fistic exercises, I shall be happy, and possibly do some good!"

To the laugh with which this was said, Mrs. Stumblesome laughed back, and stepped aside that others might approach the new-made priest.

At the end of half an hour or so, the congregation began to fade away.

When all were gone—though he knew that the Bishop and his mother were awaiting him in the sacristy—he yielded to a great desire to be alone, and stepped out among the tombs—the church-yard being the village cemetery.

Under some trees at a fence at the rear of the church he saw a figure—lithe and crouching as an Indian. A friendly, honest, but secretive smile came to the lips of this figure—the smile of a son of the woods and the mountains.

"Halloo, Red," cried Emory, "come here!"

The figure shook its head, and withdrew more into the shade.

As did the prophet of another religion from that into the priesthood of which he had just entered with relation to the mountain, Emory did with relation to the figure: as it would not come to him, he went to it. Extending his hand, he said:

"I'm awfully glad to see you! Why didn't you come in to the service?"

With a glance at the mountains, in full view from where they stood, Red replied:

"I don't belong inside!"

His spirit entered Emory, and he looked yearningly off towards the looming woods. But he was recalled to the conventional by the voice of his mother, from the corner of the church, she hav

ing come out to see what was keeping him. He said:

"I must go! But I am coming to see you. What are you doing now?"

Red grinned. What did he ever do but lead a life as free as that of the birds?

Had the Bishop seen the grin which Emory grinned back to Red, he would have thought it not very priestly. It was the natural expression of a child of nature. It was a counterpart of that of Red. These young men were essentially the same. They were naturally chums. They understood each other without speech. Though Emory's mother was rather shocked at the association, they, through their boyhood, were together whenever they could manage to be so. To that end, Emory had played hooky from school many a time, under the painful necessity of doing which-painful after the fact-Red had never found himself; for it was only when his fancy pointed in that direction-which was not often-that he ever darkened the door of the little log structure in the mountains in which the pedagogue denned.

Had the circumstances of Emory and Red been reversed—had the latter been under the restrictions, and had he had the advantages of the manor, the school, the college and the university, he would have been about such a young man, barring per-

sonal appearance, as the former; while had Emory been the son of the mountaineer, had his life been as free as the wind which played about the cabin, he would have been about such a young man, still barring personal appearance, as was the—those who did not know Red would have said—lout, from whom he now turned away to rejoin his mother.

The father of Red was commonly known as Bee Thompson. . . .

But it must not be forgotten that Mrs. Emberson is waiting.

The priesting dinner was a great spread.

It over, Emory and the Bishop smoked in Emory's room—the Bishop caring to not smoke in the presence of the laity—which would have accounted largely to Jim Shelby for his being a Bishop.

When their cigars were well going, the Bishop said:

"Emory"—Emory was surprised that he did not begin: "My dear young brother"—"Emory, I heard some of the congratulations and much of the advice which you received after your ordination. Most of the former were from the lips only. A little, a very little of the latter was good. Please forget, now, that I am your Bishop—try to think of me as simply an old man, whose life has

not been very eventful, but who has tried to discover the things for which it is worth living-in which attempt he has not felt himself to be successful till he is about through with earthly things. I would advise you as if you were my own son after the flesh as well as after the spirit. Never stand by and see anyone wronged without entering protest—as vigorous protest as the occasion demands. Never wrong anyone. Be aggressive in the interest of whatever is right. Let your mistakes be on the side of what is generous in thought, word and deed. Look upon the pain which comes of loving as a gift of God. Have faith in God and man-remembering that you cannot have faith in anyone else unless you have faith in yourself; that you cannot have faith in yourself unless you are all right at the core!"

To these words Emory made no reply. In view of the revelation which the Bishop had made to him, with relation to the ecclesiastical treatment which his father had received—what reply could he make?

After a short silence the Bishop spoke again:

"But I must not look backwards at this moment. I must look forwards—not in my own interest, but in the interest of the one to whom I have just delegated a portion of the Apostolic Authority. What do you propose to do, Emory?"

The question caused Emory to remember that he had been handed a sealed envelope as he passed down a side aisle of the church after he was priested. He took it from his pocket and opened it. It contained a call to the rectorate of one of the strong churches of the diocese. He handed this to the Bishop. The Bishop smiled in such a way that Emory saw that it was no surprise to him. He said:

"This is a great honor! You will, of course, accept!"

"I don't know," answered Emory. "I have not had time to think it over—naturally, as I had no idea of what the envelope covered till I opened it. At first thought, it seems to me that I might not come on very well in so old and conservative a parish. I am not conservative, and I doubt if I ever can be. I have been at the West a great deal during the past three years. I believe that I would suit the people out there a great deal better than here. You know, Bishop, that I am apt to speak out."

"Yes; and to strike out!" replied the Bishop with a smile.

Emory laughed outright. The Bishop, remembering that to strike out has a very different signification in base ball from what it has in fisticular, joined in the laugh, as he continued:

"If you accept the call—as I hope you may—you will probably have some trouble. But that may do you good. It may, also, do the parish no harm. Then you would be near your mother!"

The last consideration decided Emory. He had not been with his mother much since he was fifteen years of age—when, at the close of the Civil War, he went away to school. She was a vigorous woman. But she was growing old. Her husband had died when Emory was a babe—saying to her, as she stood by his bedside, the infant in her arms:

"It may be that he has been given to take my place in the church!"—words which she had repeated to their son many times through the years—notably—and then with long dwelling upon details—when he was home after his graduation from college—words which had influenced him more than anything else possibly, in the direction of the calling for which Jim Shelby had expressed himself as thinking nature had not fitted him. Her two daughters had married and left her. They had their own interests and duties. Emory was the only one left to her. He went to his table, wrote a sentence or two on a sheet of paper, and handed it to the Bishop. He had accepted the call. The Bishop looked pleased, and said:

"That is wise!" and asked: "When will you enter upon your duties?" "The Sunday after next if it is so desired."

It was so desired. Emory leaped at once into great local fame as a preacher. He was thoroughly individual in his way of seeing and putting things. His whole aim was to get what he had in mind into the minds of those who heard him. In this he was successful. For he saw things concretely. His illustrations were pat, and taken from every-day life. For instance, he once, soon after entering upon the third year of his rectorate, spoke-in illustrating fidelity-of the going from bad to worse of a well-known character of the community, who finally died miserably. He told how every human being had deserted this man-even those who had profited by his lavish expenditure of his patrimony—how those who had feasted with him had, when he was poor, ragged, hungry, turned him from their doors-how he had been driven by men, women and children from a fellow-creaturehood. Was there no one to stand by him? He had gone away from God, and would not come back. Had he no friend? His dog was true to him, followed him everywhere, shared exposure, kicks and hunger with him; and when a hunter found him cold in death, frozen stiff on a bleak hillside, which once, with hundreds of acres about, had been his, there the gaunt dog was also-on guard over his remains.

"Will that dog be rewarded in Eternity?" asked the preacher, stepping back in the pulpit, his eyelids half closed, and a white light playing between them. "He was certainly not rewarded here. He was so weak from the cold and the wet and the hunger of his long vigil that he could not walk. Did anybody lift him and carry him away, and warm and feed him? No. To save trouble he was shot, and left where he lay. The master had been kind by nature, too kind, if such a thing is possible. In his day of wealth, he had had a laugh and an open hand for everybody. In his death he was buried, with a charity that makes one shudder, in the potter's field. Will man ever learn to 'do unto others as one would have others do unto him'? Will man ever learn the meaning of the prayer: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us'? Never till man has learned to not forget kindnessestill man has come to be faithful! I repeat," exclaimed Emory, in a tone which quivered with passion: "Will that dog be rewarded in Eternity? He was faithful! And what he was in this particular must we be, or we are not Christians, or we are lost!"

The outsiders were delighted with this illustration. So were the younger church people. The same was not true of the older church people. A warden said:

"We have never been accustomed to that kind of preaching. What would old Doctor Stone"—Doctor Stone, who had died within the year, had been rector of the parish for fifty years—"what would old Doctor Stone"—that dear and good man had not been interesting once in the course of the half century that he had ministered to this people—"what would old Doctor Stone think of such preaching, were he here?"

"I should think that it would make him turn in his grave!" replied the other warden.

The older people began staying away. The younger people and the outsiders filled the church for a time. Then they began expressing sorrow for the older people. When too many empty seats were showing, Emory sent in his resignation.

Soon afterwards Jim Shelby met him, and said: "Wha' 'd I tell you, Em! As me an' Ike Sterlin' an' the miner you hit—we took a' early start and walked over to hear you that mornin'—as we come away from the church after your dog-sermon, as everybody calls it, we talked the matter over, and they agreed with me that you wa'n't cut out fur a parson. If you ever succeed in y'r trade you'll haf' t' quit bein' y'se'f, and be what th' in-

f'uential people in the church want you t' be! Min' w'at I'm a-tellin' y'u!"

"I suppose you'll keep on going to church when I'm gone, Jim?"

"Not by a dam—beg pardon!—I'd a-come as near sayin' thet 'ad the Bishop been 'ere. No! I don't care nothin' about hearin' men 'at a'n't th'se'ves!"

CHAPTER V.

BEE THOMPSON.

EMORY was not aware of how great a strain he was enduring till he had mailed his resignation to the clerk of the vestry.

This done he turned his mind to recreation, and bethought him of his indefinite engagement with Red.

After the acceptance of the call, he had sent word to that free-thing-of-the-hills that he could not come soon. But there was no ground for fear that Red would be offended by the tardiness of the coming—or have other engagement that would interfere; for he never had an engagement—engagement, I mean, of duty or profitable employment—which he would not gladly break for a day among the birds and squirrels.

The only danger was that he might get away to his haunts before his visitor arrived.

To obviate such a mishap, Emory, at a little after noon, one day, started afoot for the moun-

tains. The Thompson cabin is about half a dozen miles from the village.

The three first of these are across meadows, wheat and corn fields and pasture lands, which crawl peacefully up to the forests, which roll, as nature planted and tends them, up and over the ranges.

A great peace came over him as he approached their shades. With a quiet mind, he was about to enter them, to have his spirit soothed and his body cooled, when he was hailed.

He looked about him. For some time he could see no one. The hail came again. Soon, in the bright sunshine of this afternoon of the latter part of May, he saw, in the grasses of the meadow, from which the path which he was following goes among the trees, a shock of coarse, black, sunburnt hair, then the face under it. They belonged to the father of Red.

Emory approached him. The greetings were warm. Emory said:

"At your old business, I see, Mr. Thompson!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Thompson, as he threw himself to a supine position, in a way which indicated that he had been occupying it; "and I w'u'dn't 'a' seed y'u hedn't I been a-lookin' f'r a way t' git up thet 'r' bank!"—nodding towards the precipitate side of a foothill.

Though he thought he knew, Emory asked:

"Why do you want to get up there?"

Mr. Thompson replied:

"Lay down aside me, 'n y'r back, an' look up, an' me'be you'll sec!"

After a short silence, Mr. Thompson asked:

"Don't y'u see nuthin'?"

"I see what appear to be little black streaks," Emory replied.

Whether he would have seen these streaks is a question had he not known what to expect to see —which expectation came of his having more than once, when a boy, seen Mr. Thompson engaged in his business.

"Them's them!" said Mr. Thompson with enthusiasm, as he jumped up. "Bees 'as lots o' instinc', or w'atever y'u book folks calls it! No matter how fur th's got 'way fr'm hum, when th's loaded th'se'ves wi' wax and honey th' knows how to git back. An' I guess I knows 'bout's much 'bout w'ere theseun's home is 's th' does now. I's been a-watchin' 'em all a'ternoon! Notice 'at th' flies heavy?"

Emory was not enough of an expert in wildbees to notice shades of character in their flight. A honey-bee at a flower always seemed to him to be adroitly fumbling, and when on the way anywhere to be making for there directly and energetically. He made no reply to Mr. Thompson's question, but there was something in his look which caused Mr. Thompson to continue, as he again threw his head back, and once more peered into the zenith:

"Them fellers 'as plenty o' the sweetness an' the buildin' material 'at th' went arter-Eh? Hedn't ort t' call 'em fellers? Females? Ha. ha, ha! S'pose I c'u'd study th' ways fur more'n fifty year an' not know thet! But females 's diff'rent now f'om what th' use t' be. My wife al'ays calls husse'f a feller. Guess w'at you parsons calls th' spurrit o' the age 'as worked e'en intu th' mountains! But them bees up thar', th's takin' w'at th's got, straight hum. And th' ha'n't got fur to go, nuther! As I said afore, th' flies heavy. Th' 's a bit tired 's well's wellloaded. An' there's a dip in th' flight. Th' hum's right over thet hill, in th' holler beyant-'r on the side o' th' next hill. I w'u'dn't ast ev'ybody, Emory, but how'd y'u like to come along an' see."

Emory would like nothing better. The top of the hill was reached by laying hold of roots and trunks and limbs, and scrambling. There they stopped for a moment to catch their breaths and mop their brows and faces. Before Emory had the perspiration off his eyelids, Mr. Thompson ex-

claimed:

"Thar', w'a' d' I tell y'u!"

True enough! Across the ravine beneath them, was an old tree of gigantic proportions, with a hole in its side, among its ponderous limbs. They could—or Mr. Thompson could, and Emory fancied he could—faintly hear the buzzing, about the hole, of the inhabitants of the tree. To this door of their home, from every direction—but especially from the open and cultivated country out of which the man was come who had the intention of despoiling that home—an "innumerable company" of the little workers flew.

Having in mind a protest against this desecration, Emory said:

"Mr. Bee-I beg your pardon!"

Mr. Thompson laughed:

"Never mind a little slip like thet, my boy! I knows 'at I'm called 'Bee' Thompson! But w'y should thet bother me? It on'y shows my business! Y'u ha'n't offended w'en th' calls y'u Reverend, be y'u? Th' doctor'd think it queer 'f th' didn't call 'im 'Doctor.' An' I dunno 'f I ha'n't 'bout 's much o' a blessin' to my feller critters 's the preacher 'r th' doctor! My life 's away fr'm people, an' y'u preachers scolds 'em. W'at I sells t' 'em 's sweet, an' w'at th' doctor lets 'em 'ave 't a higher figger 's gen'ally bitter."

To change the subject—laughing as he did so—Emory said:

"Well, you'll get a good haul of sweetness out of that tree, anyway!"

"Hope so!" was the reply in the tone of the prospector who has struck it rich in the gold fields.

Then said Emory:

"If I get home in time for supper, I must be starting in that direction!"

"Come an' 'ave a snack wi' me!" said Mr. Thompson.

"I accept the invitation for to-morrow!" answered Emory. "I was on my way to your house when you hailed me. I wanted to see Red, or leave word for him! Will you carry a message from me to him?"

Mr. Thompson nodded, yes.

"Tell him that I shall come up in the morning, bright and early. I want to spend the day with him. Will he be at leisure?"

With a laugh of contempt for any other view of life than that of the mountains, Mr. Thompson replied:

"'T layzure! Red's a chip offen th' ol' block! Up 'ere a feller's born free, an' grows freer an' freer th' longer 'e lives! Layzure! Th' idee o' askin' sich a question!"

CHAPTER VI.

PONE.

EMORY was fond of outdoors. He had been a hunter and fisherman, from his earliest boyhood -till recently. When he had a trip to the brook, the river, the fields, or the woods in mind, it was no hardship for him to be stirring early. So there was no cringing in advance, upon his part, when, upon reaching home after his parting from Mr. Thompson, he told Uncle Dave to have Nellie saddled at an hour before daybreak the next morning, as well as a mount for himself. This caused the old negro's face to fairly shine. He feared "dat dem books, an' robes, an' f'ings was a-takin' all de snap outen Mars Emory!" Having served sportsmen all his life, he was a sportsman, and could still ride after the hounds and handle his single-barreled shot-gun and paw-paw fishing-rod creditably.

When—after a night's sleep, such as a man can get only upon returning from long exercise in the open—Emory came out, he found Uncle Dave holding the horses. When he saw that his young master—though the Civil War was long over and he was a free man, he was but dimly aware of these things, and considered himself as belonging to the Embersons as much as he ever did—was in leggings and walking shoes, a disappointed look came to him. He had a really offended look when, at the edge of the woods, near where Mr. Thompson had been encountered the day before, Emory dismounted, threw Nellie's leading-strap to him, and told him that he might return. When he had ridden abruptly off, without asking when or where he should come, Emory smiled after him—then gave his attention to his surroundings.

Day was breaking. Daybreak has a depressing effect upon one of imagination and sensibility. It is distinctly ghostly. If it be in the spring the birds will soon be in chorus, but they are now sleepily chirping each in its individual way. The buzzards sit on dead limbs, hardly enough awake to croak, stretch their legs and raise their wings, which are so heavy with the damps of the night that they are useless. Having climbed a fence, Emory stood in a meadow, and shook himself to drive away the horrors. But there was soon a change. Was it to the more agreeable? There was still the unearthly in the situation. There

seemed to be going on a gigantic and multitudinous wrestle-to the death. It was between Light and Darkness, between Day and Night. There was the general wrestle between Shadow, which came from the mountains, and Dawn, which came over the meadows. Then there was the particular wrestle between the individual shadow and the individual light at each tree and bush, in every fence corner, and in each ravine. There was the large effect of two mighty armies falling upon each other, and the smaller effects of conflicts between corps, divisions, regiments, companies, persons, in close, closer, hand-to-hand battle. He who has never witnessed a clear spring or summer dawn cannot imagine the phase of nature of which I have been trying to convey an impression, form a notion of Emory's emotions under its influence, or understand his inclination to wonder if science may not some day come to appreciate at least a residuum of truth in the holding of Goethe that darkness is something real, not simply the absence of light. The kaleidoscopic spectacle held him motionless. When it was come to an endwhen Light had completely conquered—he came to himself with a sigh—a sigh of relief from tension—such a sigh as comes from the onlooking boy when one of two men who have been straining and swaying in each other's embrace throws his

adversary and is clearly victor. The birds, also, seemed to have come to themselves. They were now in full chorus.

It had been some years since Emory had been out thus—clear away from the dwellings of men—at a dawn and a sunrise. He lent his ears to the great bird choir. He picked out the notes of individual birds—that of the robin—that of the song sparrows—that of— There was a peculiar rattling song. From what bird did it come? He remembered the rattle distinctly, but could not recall the image of the rattler. He located the rattle. It came from a small oak, at the edge of the meadow, near the wood. He had a glimpse of a little brown bird. He pulled a field glass from its case. Did the motion disturb the bird? It darted over the farm lands.

With the impetuosity of the hunter—one may cease to be a hunter of the plumage or the bodies of birds and still be a hunter of their notes and of their appearances—he was about to follow, took a step, when he remembered his engagement in the other direction.

He must make up for the time he had lost. So, taking another hole in his belt, that his hatchet mighty carry more snugly, and patting his revolver and hunting knife in their sheaths, he vaulted a fence, entered the woods, and took a

path up a watercourse—a path which he had often, too often, taken when a boy. In imagination he was again not more than twelve years old, and refelt the elation, the dread and the conscience-prickings of truancy. At the end of a quarter of an hour, as he still hurried on, he reached for his handkerchief to wipe his brow, thinking that he had not been taking enough exercise, or he would not be so soft—when he was probably something over a third of the way from where he had entered the wood to the Thompson clearing—something fell in the path a few yards ahead of him. He stepped on toward it. It was the body of a woodpecker.

It was as suddenly dead as if it had been struck by a thunderbolt. Its feathers were rumpled. There was much more red upon them than the red of its head and neck, which, whatever had struck it, had cut as well as broken.

After his just passed experience with the birds, the sight of this slaughter of one of the most striking of them sickened him. What had struck it? He had heard the report of no gun, the twang of no bow string. Still, he thought he knew what had been the instrument of its death.

A furtive figure moved among the trees. He cried out:

"Hello, Red!"

Yes, Red it was!

He came forward, seeming only to touch objects, such as fallen trees, as he crossed them—came forward as lightly as a cat, into the path beyond the fallen bird. When he reached it he touched it with the toe of his shoe, and smiled as the body turned over and the head remained as it lay.

Emory said:

"I see you still throw!"

"Yes," was the answer. "I seed y'u comin' up th' path. Th' 'pecker seed y'u, too. He must 'a' thought 'at when y'u was a-reaching in y'r pocket 'twas fur some deadly weepon. Thet wa' th' en' o' 'im!"

"Poor little devil!" said Emory.

"W'at's th' matter o' y'u, Em? Y'u didn't use t' be no kind o' milksop!"

"Why did you kill him, Red?"

"Got t' kill things t' live!"

"But you don't eat woodpeckers!"

"'Ceptin' w'en we're hard put! But I make 't a p'int to Jo a killin' 'fore breakfas' ev'ry mornin'—
t' keep m' han' in! George! see thet squ'r'l!" as he snatched a stone from his pocket and threw.

The squirrel dropped from the limb along which it had been running. But it was only stunned. It succeeded in catching hold of a

lower limb. Flattening itself to this, and hurrying along the further side of it, so as to not offer itself as a mark, it reached the trunk of the tree, up which it scrambled and attained its hole.

"I've got y'u all th' same!" said Red, through his clenched teeth; then to Emory: "I know thet hol'! 'Ta'n't deep. Wait a minit'!"

He was off and up the tree, with the lightness and ferocity of a catamount.

He had soon reached the ground with the fiercely struggling little creature in his hand—held so that it could not bite him—with an art which came of long years of practice.

"Why don't you kill it!" almost commanded Emory.

"Why!" replied Red, with a cruel, feline look in his face, "th' squ'r'l's a plucky little varmint! Fights's long's 't can! Dies beautiful!"

This moralizing took his attention away from his victim sufficiently to give it a chance to nip him.

Greatly angered, he struck the little wretch at the back of the head so viciously that, fortunately, it was killed instantly.

Emory laughed—not at the killing, but at the biting.

Red reddened—if such a thing was possible,

and frowned. Then he thought better of it, laughed, too, and said:

"Nothin' kin b' blamed fur fightin' the best 't knows fur 'ts life!"

This pleased Emory, and he said:

"You've seen a bottom truth, Red, and there's hope for you!"

Red looked puzzled.

Pocketing the squirrel and leaving the woodpecker where it had fallen, he led the way, at a rapid pace, to the ragged little clearing, in the middle of which stood the mud-chinked, clapboard-roofed, double log cabin, in which the Thompsons were always "at home" -or would be sooner or later-to any person, or any number of persons who might see fit to drop in. Their door had never been locked since it was hung on its wooden hinges. There was no provision for its locking. Its only fastening was a wooden latch lifted by a string of leather, which was always "hanging out." Whoever saw fit to lay hold of this string was perfectly welcome to walk in. Were any one at home he was served with the best the cabin afforded. Were no one at home, he was at liberty to help himself to the best he could find. The Thompson family was not a cultured one -many would have thought it scarcely civilized. May be that was the reason it was "given to hospitality." Were it possible for St. Paul to walk into this clearing and pull the latchstring which to this day sways in every breeze and flaps in every gale, he would find, or, in waiting, see come in, simple folk after his liking.

Mrs. Thompson—a large, freckled woman, the picture of matronly health—welcomed Emory, heartily gripped his hand, shook his arm, and

slapped him on the back, saying:

"Lord-o'-massy! how y'u've growed! Howde like bein' a preacher? 'Spected suthin' better o' y'u! Bee an' Red keeps posted. W'at 'ey knows I knows. Y'u'd better be a straight up an' down preacher an' a crooked an' cringin' suthin' e'se, though! Guess y'u'll do! Us ladies needs some-un' t' look out fur 's—ha! ha! ha! But how d'y'u come t' be so late? Bet 'tis Red's fault. Never know w'en 'e's comin' back. But I won't scold! But w'en a feller's 'ad breakfas' ready fur 'alf a' 'our an' 'tis growin' col' sh' a'n't in the best o' 'umors nat'ally.'

The breakfast to which Emory sat down with Mrs. Thompson and Red had as foundation, pone—a cornbread peculiar to the South. Emory had seen its dough prepared by the blacks and the poor whites through all the years—excepting, of course, those which he had spent at the North. The process of its making is simple. Into water is

stirred cornmeal, with a little salt, till a thick paste is produced. The baking is as simple. The dough is poured into a deep iron pan. When its heavy iron lid is placed, the pan is buried in hot wood ashes, where it is allowed to remain-how long only an expert as to the heat of the ashes and the readiness with which such dough yields to its influence could know. The result is served hot. To the one who has never scented or tasted pone its fragrance, its sweetness and other palatabilities would be revelations. Nothing at the North so reminds the Southerner of this staple and delicacy of his youth as that universal delicacy and staple of the North-pound cake. But there is a difference. The sweetness of the pound cake is put in, while the sweetness of the pone is developed.

I must not be understood as advising the cook of the North to attempt the production of a pone. He has not the corn of the South, the wood ashes, the iron pan, or the ability which the cook of the South does not acquire so much as inherit, or breathe with the air to which—not he, but she—is born.

Built upon the pone in the construction of the breakfast in mind there were crisp bacon—to the frying of which one must be born, and born at the South, as much as to the producing of pone—

small game, and vegetables, fresh and crisp from the garden, to say nothing of the coffee, made from parched wheat, and caused to be almost as good as the real stuff by burnt molasses and rich cream.

Emory never enjoyed a breakfast more thoroughly. In its course he complimented everything. When he made some particularly fulsome remark about the pone, Mrs. Thompson shook her knife at him, and said:

"Y'u al'ays was a blarney, Em Emberson, an' a reg'lar woman-killer! But thur never was a Emberson 'at wusn't thet! An' thur' never wus one o' 'em who wouldn't stan' by any one 'oo wore a petticoat—nur 'oo wouldn't ruther do hit in drawin' blood 'an in any other way—'ceptin' y'r father, meybe; an' 'e 'us made outen a durn sight better preacher-stuff 'an 'is son, I's thinkin'! An' th' men folks o' y'r mother's fambly was jus' as bad—'f not a leetle wus. Thar'us 'er father. 'E'us a reg'lar hair-trigger. 'E'd shoot th' daylights outen a feller who looked cross-eyed at a female. But—''

The wink which followed this conjunction was fuller of meaning than any set of words could have been.

Emory laughed, said something commendatory

of the brittle and juicy radish into which he had bitten, and added:

"There must be some member of this family who is a good gardener!"

"An' hit ha'n't Red 'r Bee!" replied Mrs. Thompson, with an expression between a smile and a frown. "Ketch either o' 'em workin' in th' garden! Red's al'ays out a-throwin' stunes and Bee a-huntin' honey!"

"By the way, where is Mr. Thompson?" asked Emory.

"Lord on'y knows!" answered Mrs. Thompson. "When I got outen bed this mornin' I seed 'im a-layin' on th' bench down by th' spring house, 'is gun a-leanin' ag'in' the wall aside 'im. All a suddent he springs up an' makes a bee-line inter th' woods. He'd seed w'at 'e's allers a-lookin' f'r, I 'spec'. 'E's th' durn'des' insec' hunter the Lord ever made!"

There was a strong, springy step on the hard path without. Mr. Thompson, hatless, his long, bushy hair over his keen black eyes, stepped in. He gave the guest a loud welcome, a crushing grip of the hand, kicked a short home-made bench to the end of the table opposite his wife, sat down, and fell to with an appetite, with the keenness of which Emory could fully sympathize—such an appetite as the well man is sure to have after an ante-breakfast tramp in the mountains.

CHAPTER VII.

THE POT.

HALF an hour later the three men were taking their pipes under a tree at the edge of the clearing. They were talking about shooting. Saying, "You see, Mr. Thompson, I remember the bore of your gun!" Emory took from his pocket a handful of bullets—which he had had Uncle Dave mold the evening before—and handed them to his host. Mr. Thompson's eyes sparkled. They fairly danced when his guest took from another pocket a brand-new powder horn, adding, as he handed it after the bullets, "You'll also see that I have not forgotten your choice of grain in powder!"

Mr. Thompson sprang to his feet, hurried to the cabin, and returned with his squirrel rifle. His feats with that almost constant companion of his were wonderful. There were swifts circling in the air. He brought one of these down—before Emory had a chance to say a word in its interest. It fell so far away that no one thought of going

after it. As it fell the gun was reloaded. The gunner's quick eye caught a glimpse of a gray squirrel. The stock was to his shoulder, and there was a discharge. He had not touched the squirrel, but had not missed it. He had barked it. When Red brought it to him he said:

"Take 't t' y'r mother."

"She's more meat now 'an sh' k'n use!"

"Throw 't 'way then!"

"It not being needed, wouldn't it have been as well to let it live?" asked Emory.

Mr. Thompson looked at him as if he did not understand the question.

At this point the attention of all three was taken by a crackling in the woods near at hand. It proved to have been made by Ike Sterling and Jim Shelby, who were out for a day's hunting. The greetings between them and Bee were rough, genuine, ungrammatical, so far as two-thirds of them were concerned. The saving grace of the one-third, from Sterling, was that it was grammatical. It was as rough as the other thirds. In a moment Emory was mingling in the persiflage. There was a certain restraint in what they said to him—that restraint which always comes on rough men when they are speaking to a clergyman, which shows the need in human intercourse of the symbolization, by a class of men set apart

for that purpose, of what is the opposite of rough.

There were now within the clearing five men, each of whom was accustomed to the use of at least some one instrument of destruction, and acquainted with the woods and the ways of the wild things which inhabit them. Their badinage faded off into talk about hunting. Excepting Emory and Red, whose hands were empty, each of them lauded the particular instrument of destruction which he had in hand—Ike, his double-barreled breach-loader; Jim, his choke-bored muzzle-loader; Bee, his long, small-bored, patch-and-ball rifle. At last Ike said:

"Psha! here! I'm growing tired of this gabble! Let's put up or shut up!"

"You'll be th' fust man to shet up!" replied Shelby, with a laugh which was not without a ring of defiance.

Reaching in his pocket, Ike asked:

"Who'll hold the pot? Will you, Em?" and, before Emory could reply, added: "I needn't say to you that in the hills every man's a law unto himself!"

This was intended to convey that Emory was hesitating. But such was not the case. Knowing that there was no possibility that he could dissuade these men from betting, having been reared in an atmosphere of there being nothing wrong in

betting so long as each bettor could afford his stake, and the suggestion coming to his mind that he might have more influence later through not pretending to be better than he was, rather yielding to his inclination—against which he had many a hard fight in later years—to appear worse than he was, Emory replied:

"Yes; and I'll see you!"

This betting slang caused a snickering laugh, because a clergyman took part in it.

Ike would not have been a Southern man had he been able to resist such a challenge—especially as he had provoked it. He would have felt himself disgraced by not meeting it from anyone. He would have been laughed out of the clearing, if not out of the community, had he weakened before it from a clergyman. He promptly placed a dollar bill in Emory's hand. Emory covered it with a bill of like denomination. Bee had received an advance on the honey from the tree which he had discovered the day before, and was able to add his dollar. Shelby came in with his. At this juncture Mrs. Thompson joined the party She was quick to scent what was in the wind. She hurried back to the cabin. When she returned, at a gait as quick and strong as that of a man, she handed something to Red. He was in, too.

It was arranged that the five were to separate,

spend the intervening time as each saw fit, and be back at the point of parting at six o'clock in the evening, each bringing the scalps of what he had been able to kill.

As Emory had his revolver, the only one without a firearm was Red. But he was not long unarmed. Having entered the cabin, he returned at
once with a leathern pouch, the strap of which he
passed over his head to his left shoulder, from
which it swung to his right hip. Emory heard the
grinding of small stones or large pebbles against
each other, and he knew that they had been collected with great care from the beds of mountain streams and were of various sizes for throwing at game of various sizes at various distances.
They were the last to leave the clearing. As they
allowed a great stump to send them in diverging
ways, Emory said:

"Our day is spoiled, Red, but we'll have another!"

"'Twon't be sp'iled s' awful bad 'f I get th' pot!" replied Red, fondling the leathern pouch which rested well back.

One of the conditions was that he who should not be back at the time specified would be out of the contest, have no chance at the pot, of course, and be forever parted from the dollar which he had put in it.

All but Emory and Bee were back a little before that time. Emory was back at six almost to the second—not because he had any personal interest in the pot; he had not bagged a thing which was visible-but because his faculty of time was large, and he found it hard to be late, even when he tried. It was ten minutes after six when Bee arrived, his face aflame and his eyes dancing as if he had made a great success. But there was no more evidence that he had bagged anything than there was that Emory had done so. As to the others, Jim and Ike were about a tie, but Red had so many scalps that he was clearly ahead of not only either of them, but of both of them together—so clearly so that there was no need of either counting or waiting for the consent of anyone. So Emory turned the pot over to him. Then began the badgering. Said Jim to Ike: "The game on the hills must 'a' hearn tell o' how abominable some o' th'r ancestors was served on the table o' y'r eatin' house, an' concluded th' wouldn't stan' still!" Ike retorted: "About the only thing you can hit is a nail, and you have to have a hammer to do that!" But the unsuccessful did not do quite all the badgering. Red was so elated by his victory that he actually spoke, saying:

"Th' on'y thin' dad kin hunt's a bee!"

"Thar y'r 'bout right!" said Mr. Thompson.

The fact is that he entered the contest with no thought of not winning if he could. But he had happened to approach the woods by way of the spring house. That brought to his mind the bees which he had seen that morning starting toward their harvest field. He looked up and saw two or three of these workers returning. Though there is a hint as to the location of their residence in the diverging of going bees, its professional hunter wants that hint verified by the converging of their returning. The complete verification requires long and patient waiting and watching. Then come the walking and the climbing and the sliding necessary to the, so to speak, putting the finger on it. The vicinity of the springhouse was not a good place for the watching of the making for home of these particular bees. The summit of a knoll to the westward would be a much better place for that purpose. For there Mr. Thompson made at once. There he lay for hours watching the coming and going of the little busybodies, trying to make up his mind as to whether they were all from the same tree and, that point settled affirmatively, as to where the tree might be. Then came the definite hunt, which began about noon. When the tree was located Mr. Thompson thought, for the first time since leaving his home clearing, of the competition on

which he had started. He had no watch. But the day was clear and he had but to glance at the shadows to know nearly enough what the hour was. He saw that if he reached home by the time his guests were returning he would have, as he said to himself, to "be a-humpin' 't." And he humped it, with the result, as to the time of his reaching the clearing, that the reader knows. In reply to his son's remark Mr. Thompson said: "Me an' Emory seems t' be 'n th' same boat! I looks sky'ards for bees; 'e look in th' same direction for su'thin' else—angels! But th' result's th' same. Th' feller 'at don' keep 'is eyes on th' earth's putty sure to lose th' pot!"

That there was a general laugh at this remark I need not say. The laity always enjoys a poke at the clergy. And I hope that at even this stage of our history the reader is sufficiently acquainted with our hero to know that he had enough natural grace to laugh at a joke at his own expense.

"But I have bagged more game than you think—real game!"

This assurance from Emory was followed by a laugh from him, which was more hearty than the one which he had laughed in response to Mr. Thompson's remark at the expense of the sacred calling for which he had a high regard, for which he doubted if he were naturally fitted, for which

he was quite sure he was not sufficiently pious—a laugh which was caused by the blank look which the assurance brought to the faces about. He went on: "I knew better than to present the game which I took for counting in competition for the pot. While you fellows, excepting Mr. Thompson, were killing things—and I have no doubt that my fellow-skygazer would have killed more than any one of you excepting that prince of killers (his son, Red), had he not seen a chance to rob some of his fellow-creatures—while you fellows were killing things, I spent most of the time under the wide, low, down-bending limbs of a beech."

"Ahem!" from Jim.

At this Emory smiled and proceeded: "At my feet gurgled a little spring—"

"Poetry," put in Ike.

Emory continued: "I remained very quiet. I saw a thrush more closely than one often sees those shy birds. A squirrel actually hopped over my legs. A bee—whether it was one of those, the result of whose industry Mr. Thompson was after I do not know—rested for a moment on the lapel of my coat. A cardinal whistled within three feet of me. A colony of ants—"

"Made nests in your ears?" asked Ike, laughingly.

"Keep still, Ike," blurted Jim. "Blast m' but-

tons, 'f I don' think 'at Em made better use 'f 'is day 'an arry one 'f us! Em, I've bin thinkin' a lot 'bout 'r feller critters, who can't swear, n'r shoot guns, n'r do a lot o' other things 'at we kin, since I heard that dog-sermon o' yourn!"

Thinking that, under the circumstances, more harm than good might come of discussing the principles of what afterward came to be known as Biophilism—having awakened the minds of these rough men with regard to those principles—Emory changed the subject by saying:

"There'd be enough light yet for a little target practice."

The suggestion was favorably received. It was arranged that each of the five present should have three shots with each of the guns at hand. Then these men would never do anything in the way of competition as to ability for nothing. There would be neither fun nor stimulation in that. On Emory's suggestion—he having made the suggestion as to shooting, his right to make the first suggestion in the consequent particular was tacitly conceded—it was arranged that the one doing the poorest shooting at a mark sixty yards away with Mr. Thompson's gun should carry Mrs. Thompson a bucket of water for supper. On Ike's suggestion it was agreed that the one doing the poorest shooting with Jim's gun should pare the potatoes

for her. On Jim's suggestion it was understood that the one doing the poorest shooting with Ike's gun should not—save by unanimous consent—have more than a smell at the corncob stopper of the jug in which was kept the "pinetop," as the universal appetizer of the mountains of that part of the South was called in those days.

The shooting with these arms concluded, Emory drew his revolver. With this weapon every one present was familiar in a general way. But this one had all the improvements known at that date. It was self-cocking, something of which all had heard, but which no one knew save its owner. When Red, whose tongue had not yet reacted from the loosening effect of his success, suggested a try with it, Emory demurred, on the ground that he was the only one of the company who had used the new-fangled shootin'-iron, as Jim had called it.

"He's afeard," said that same irrepressible Jim, "thet 'e'll be so shuck up by bein' beat 'at 'e can't carry thet bucket o' water f'r Mrs. Thompson!"

Emory had been—allowed himself to be—defeated by all in the shooting with Mr. Thompson's squirrel rifle. He had intended that there should be the same result in the shooting with the other guns. But human nature is human nature, and the remarks of neither Jim or Ike were regardful

of his feelings. So when he took the gun of each of them he was of a different mind. And win he did in each case by a hair's breadth. Indeed, he tied and had to shoot it over with Ike. But they were defeated. And they were chagrined. This each showed in his individual way. Ike began making excuses. When they were laughed at he showed a disposition to anger. But when he saw a cool smile on Emory's lips, which began to harden, he got control of himself and laughed, though the laugh was somewhat forced. Jim said:

"Well, Em, I'll be plagued 'f y'u don' beat all tarnation! W'ere'd y'u larn t' shoot?"

"Mr. Thompson here taught me what to do with a gun when I wanted to hit anything!"

Jim grinned, noticing the pleased look on Mr. Thompson's face, and remembering that Mr. Thompson's was the only gun with which Emory had not driven the centre or grazed it, said:

"But thet was a good many years ago. 'Ow've y'u kep' in practice sence y'u've bin 'way fr'm home?" Emory replied something about a shooting-gallery which he had frequented for some years, of a gunning club to which he belonged, of target practice, of clay-pigeon shooting. The fact is that during his college and university days he had taken only less interest in shooting than he

had in boxing. Though each of the five could shoot well with an old-fashioned army revolver, every one of them was at sea with the self-cocker, save Emory. Of him it seemed to be a part. One would have said that when he looked at anything, stationary or moving, with the thought of hitting it, it was hit. This impression was so strong upon Jim—a man of imagination—that when, with the delight in his eyes of the consciousness of doing well a thing difficult to do, Emory glanced toward him, he started, saying, with a half serious smile: "For the love of cheese, don' look this way!"

Take an illustration of Emory's power with the revolver. On a high spray of a tree at the edge of the clearing opposite the one at which the men were grouped, bobbed back and forth, up and down, a mottle-breasted thrush, bringing its head and tail almost together, now over, now under its body, with that catarrhal sound at which one always wonders, it coming from one who, on occasion, is so divine a singer. Pointing to the bird, who was enjoying his swing as he scolded those whose racket had been disturbing the peace of his abode, Red, whose tongue was still loose, asked:

"Can y'u bring 'im down, Em?"

"I might, but I won't!" was the answer "I think I can disturb his perch, though!"

A movement of Emory's hand and a flash. The bird dropped a few feet, opened its wings, caught itself and darted away into the woods. The spray on which it had perched came to the ground as if it had been nipped with a pair of pruning shears. Jim said:

"Em, the hedge 't the front o' my yard neeus trimmin'. W'a'll y'u charge t' bring it inter shape wi' y'r gun?"

"Maybe he'll shoot the skins off the potatoes for supper!" said Ike

"You might git 'im t' shoot th' smell offen th' cork, so's t' not 'ave a edge put on y'r thirst!" was the rejoinder.

The laugh which followed was not over when Emory said:

"Everybody's had a chance at his specialty but Red. There's been no throwing yet!"

Glancing at the three piles of scalps lying on the ground, Jim remarked:

"Seems t' me thet th're's bin t' much!"

But Emory picked up a stone and hurled it with such perfection of aim at the handle of an axe which stuck in a log in a wood pile at the corner of the cabin, some forty yards away, that the handle panged, the axe came to the ground, and Red's spirit of rivalry was up. The other members of the party threw a few times, then were wit-

nesses. Red killed a sapsucker who was dodging about on a sapling as far off as the wood pile, showing that if Emory had awakened in him any thoughts or sentiments of consideration for the lives of his fellow-beings who cannot talk and so present their rights to a place on earth, they were not very wide awake. Emory made nearly as good a throw by nipping a twig at the end of which fluttered a leaf from the body of the same sapling. Then Red took his hatchet from his belt and sent it singing through the air over the sapling. Its edge sank into a knot of an old oak. Emory's hatchet was in hand immediately, was thrown and sang as its predecessor had sung, and the handle of Red's was split. Then came hunting knives. Emory's darted from his hand. It stuck straight out from a spot on a poplar near the oak. Then Red's, as he said, "Handle fur handle!" and his threat was fulfilled.

As the applause for this wonderful feat was ending, Emory, who had started it, picked up a stone, looked over his shoulder, drew back his hand, as if he were going to throw at something in front of him, and when it reached the position for such a throw let the stone go to his rear. It disappeared in a hole in an old elm, distant, say thirty yards—a good-sized hole left at the falling of a hollow limb. Red took a stone, went through

the same motions, and it disappeared in the same place. Emory reperformed the feat. Red followed suit. Emory sent another stone to the same vanishing. So did Red. Emory was about to do so again when Jim said:

"Thur! thur! W'at spite 've y'u fellers got 't th' woodpeckers 'et y'u wanter fill up w'ere a pair o' 'em may wan' ter move t'?"

At this point Mrs. Thompson appeared at the door. Supper was ready.

"And I haven't brought the bucket of water," said Emory.

"And I ha'n't peeled the pertaters!" said Jim. They started together for the cabin at a run. The others followed.

The jug was produced.

"And I'm the only one that has to suffer!" mourned Ike.

"I move," said Emory.

"I second," said Jim.

"All 'n favor," said Mr. Thompson.

The affirmative vote was unanimous.

As Ike took the jug from his lips Jim said: "I'll bet a day's work 'et Ike can't hol' 'is breath 's long in smellin' as 'e's hel' it 'n drinkin'!"

There was no taker.

CHAPTER VIII.

LOOKING INTO THE MUZZLES OF TWO REVOLVERS.

On the way home, in a meadow, Jim Shelby stopped suddenly and said:

"Em, there's suthin' I wan' t' know. Y'r shootin' with th' guns was wonde'ful, the way y'u hit things wi' y'r revolver w's astonishin', but y'ur throwin' w's mirac'lous! We're d' y'u learn?"

"When we were boys Red and I spent days and days together in the mountains and did little from morning to night but throw."

"So, th' young Thompson 'ad t' do 'ith startin' y'u t' throwin' as th' old 'un 'ad to 'ith startin' y'u t' shootin'! Y'u needn' tol' me thet. But y'u more'n started. Y'u went on to mighty nigh perfection 'n both lines. Y'u throwed some light on how y'u come t' be s' good a shooter. 'T remains f'r y'u t' reveal how y'u become so good a thrower!"

"Well, there is no set of men who find life so

much of a bore as the clubmen of the cities. Some time after I had become a member of the shooting club of which I have spoken, I gave an exhibition of how I could throw a stone, a knife and a hatchet. The witnesses reported. Others wanted to be witnesses. I soon had more pupils than I wanted. The new thing had taken as a new thing is apt to take with such men. We threw, not only in the gallery, but outdoors—at targets, at clay pigeons and in the woods. So in the years that I've been from home I have had about as much practice in throwing as Red has had in the mountains. Had this not been so he would have had easier work in beating me this evening."

The village reached, Emory and Jim were invited into the Sterling House for "a nip and a nibble," as Ike put it. Emory excused himself on the ground that he had a trip before him the next day which would take him from home very early in the morning. The fact was, he did not care to hear or take part in the talking over the events of the day in the presence of loafers, to which he knew Jim and Ike would proceed.

But his excuse was not trumped up. The next morning he rode away bright and early, sitting Nellie in a way which showed that he was out for something more than simply a ride. He was off for a call upon the Bishop. That venerable successor of the Apostles beamed on him, saying:

"Everybody has to learn through experience, my son!"

Though he thought he knew, Emory asked:

"What do you mean, Bishop?"

"That young men who receive the call and heed it have to learn how to preach, what to preach and how to conduct a parish, just as other young men have to learn how to do anything else—to conduct a suit in court, to shoe a horse, or run a grocery store."

"My dear Bishop," said Emory, "though probably as bumptious as the average young man, I am not bumptious enough to think that I am very wise or able in any one of the particulars which you have mentioned, though I am not aware that any fault has been found with the way in which I have conducted the church from the rectorate of which I have just resigned, or with the manner in which I have preached while occupying its chancel. What has been objected to, if I am not mistaken, is the matter of my preaching. And with that, it seems to me, nobody had the right to find fault. It is settled by the Church. Nobody has accused me of heresy, I hope?"

"No."

"I thought so! My journalistic experience has

done me one good. As I recognize the right of the paper to adopt its policy—to say with what notion in mind an employé shall write—so I recognize the right of the Church to her creeds. Did I feel it my duty to combat any article of either of those creeds I would step out of the ministry of the Church. And were a local church of which I had become rector too high or too low or too broad for me, I would leave. But my preaching in the church which I have been serving has been entirely practical. I have made an honest and earnest effort to discover the principles taught and lived by the Founder. To that end I have made a careful, and, as nearly as possible, independent study of the New Testament-especially of the Gospel 'according to' each of the four Evangelists. I have found that the life of Christ was one of pure and simple self-sacrifice, and that all of His infinite intelligence went out in the direction of having others live such a life. I have found that He was never dogmatic, unless the new commandment, 'that ye love one another,' which He gave through the Apostles for the government of those who should come into His kingdom, may be so considered. In my preaching I have left all matters of dogma, all matters of general, local or individual belief, alone as completely as I could. I have tried to have it seem that to be a

Christian one must have within him a principle—that through the activity of this principle he must love."

"Yes," asked the Bishop, mildly, "but have you ever—excepting so far as the holdings of the three great parties in the Church (the high, the low and the broad), are concerned—have you ever stopped to ask: 'What do the people want me to preach?'"

Looking at him through eyes wide from astonishment, Emory replied: "No! To ask such a question never entered my head! I presumed that they wanted me to preach the Gospel! Were I a physician of the body I would never dream of asking the patient what medicine he would like to have me minister. I would minister the remedy which I thought his case demanded. And I have felt the same duty incumbent upon me as a physician of the soul!"

The Bishop laughed: "Emory, Emory; I'm afraid you'll never be a Bishop!"

Emory laughed back: "I know a blacksmith who is of the same opinion!"

"And his name is Shelby?"

Emory nodded.

The Bishop threw back his head and laughed more heartily than Emory had ever seen him. That Jim Shelby was a character the reader

knows. The Bishop had evidently had some encounter with him. The Bishop said:

"He called upon me the other day, and, with a world of commendation of you, reported what he called your dog-sermon. He is an original. He has a large mind. His language was picturesque. He—— But be sure that what he said did not lower you in my estimation!" Then, seriously: "You were saying——?"

Emory replied: "What I might have been going to say is of less importance than that when a Bishop and a man so thoroughly not a Bishop as Jim Shelby agree upon a certain point with relation to a third person, they cannot be far from right. But I have never thought of wanting to be a Bishop. And it seems to me that you once intimated to me that one may pay too great a price for entrance into the Episcopacy."

"You are right, Emory, you are right!" said the old man, with bowed head, and the restrospective in tone and look. "But," raising his head and looking fully at the young man, affectionately, "I, having been intimate with your father, having known you from your infancy, having acquaintance with your mother, respecting your family, having priested you, I, for these reasons among many, not the least of which is that, in this day of indifference, the Church needs mili-

tant blood, I would like to have you in the Church and ahead in the Church. Put the question which I have asked you in another way: You have imagined yourself a physician of the body. Were you such a physician, would you not diagnose the case before you determined what medicine to give? Would you not take into the account all the conditions complicating the casesuch as environment, condition of the stomach, state of the nerves, constitution, heredity? You would not pour down the patient's throat a cupful of medicine when you saw that he could not stand more than a teaspoonful-would you? You would give the remedy in the form least offensive to the patient, and best adapted to the power of assimilation. But what the people need from the pulpit is nutriment rather than medicine, and the rule of St. Paul is not entirely bad: 'Meat for the adults, milk for the babes!' Ah, Emory, there are many sides to this question!"

"I see!" said Emory, meditatively. "It is a mean and selfish thing for a man to withhold any part of the truth, or to adulterate it to his own advantage, and it is a wicked thing for him to not go to the trouble to know how much of it his hearers can stand and in what form it will be the most acceptable to them, as well as most

beneficial! I thank you, Bishop!" and proceeded to take his departure.

He was crestfallen. He had, half-unconsciously, been regarding himself a martyr to the truth. Now he was not sure that he had not made a fool of himself. He mounted and started homeward at a gallop. But he had not ridden far before another phase of the matter came to his mind.

By what right were old churchmen still children? Some blame might attach to the clergy. But were the people themselves blameless? Those to whom he had been ministering were capable of thinking; for, at least, the principal ones of them were successful—one in trade, another at the law, another as an editor, another as a farmer. Each of them had thought, and come to conclusions, in the line of his temporal activities. Why had he not thought and come to conclusions as to, What is Christianity? Should the prejudices of any man be respected when he had abundant opportunity to know the facts in the case? No one would say so with regard to his commercial, scientific, philosophical, or professional prejudices. Why should anyone say so with regard to his religious prejudices?

And had the people of whom he was thinking

had opportunity to know the facts of Christianity?

He had always known the man who had preceded him as their rector. He was a good man, negatively and conventionally. But during the fifty years of his honestly trying to minister to them in heavenly things he had not given them a glimpse of positive Christianity, for the simple reason that he was incapable of catching a glimpse of it himself.

But each of them had a Bible!

Keeping Nellie to the walk to which he had brought her in the course of this train of thought, her rider yielded to another, which I am less inclined to record, because it was more personal. Had they treated him right? They had not taken into the account that he was young and inexperienced, that he wanted to be near his mother in her declining years, that he had his way to make in the world. He thought bitterly of how, instead of being willing to put a cup of cold water to his lips, they had knocked it away when he was about to drink. Bitter resentment was in his heart. In hot anger he put Nellie again to the gallop, and rode furiously home. When he arrived there, he went immediately to his room. When he came down he was in lay attire. The grieved look which his mother's noticing that he was in something else than clericals brought to her face, sent him back.

Sitting on the edge of his bed, he thought the matter through. Should he abandon the ministry, there was but one thing open to him-journalism. The thought of returning to that made him sick at heart. He would rather be doing something than reporting what was doing. The Church needed men who would preach pure Christianity and take the consequences. Then it was not a pleasant thing to think of how those who had treated him so unmercifully would boastin their hearts, if not openly, and, probably, openly, with many pious phrases-of how they had driven him from his calling. This was a not very noble consideration, but I fear that it had influence with him. Though an honest, and a brave, and a generous young fellow, he was very human. Maybe if he had not been very human he would not have been honest and brave and generous. And does being even impetuously human -as he certainly was-disqualify one for the priesthood? Be this as it may, he made his mother very happy by appearing for dinner in his clericals. She rose from her chair, went to him, kissed him, and said:

"That's right, my son! You are in holy orders! Let that settle it! You have had trouble.

You will have more! But be always true to the truth as you see it! You may be whipped. But let it never be said of my son that he ran!"

The old lady's eyes flashed; she stood erect; and her lips closed firmly as she concluded. He smiled through tears as he passionately returned her kiss, and said:

"You've never heard of my running yet, have you, mother?"

"No," she replied, with a gleam of pride in her eyes, "not so far as a bodily enemy is concerned! I have sometimes thought that you like physical warfare a little too well. I am anxious to know that you have fought and conquered some spiritual enemies. They are without you. There is spiritual pride in high places! You are sure to come in contact with that! There are the powers of air and their prince. There is fame, if it should ever come to you. I do not speak of place and money, because you would care for them only to the extent that they would minister to fame. You see that I have made a close study of you. But these would not be dangerous were it not for those within, such—in your case—as impetuosity, discontent and impatience. Close with them, Emory! Master them!"

Emory bowed, gave her his arm, and led her in to dinner, thinking, as he glanced at her burning eyes, at her fine head and face, at her glory of gray hair, at her imposing figure, and noted her queenly bearing, that nowhere—and we know that he had been about a good deal—had he seen so splendid a woman, and saying to himself:

"I do not wonder that my father fell in love with her!"

The next day he received a letter from the Bishop offering him a position on the staff of the Cathedral clergy.

He declined, as he did not care for the shelving which becoming an institutional clergyman means.

And there was another reason for his declination.

It will be remembered that his last bit of reportorial work was the writing up of the opening by the Government of the new Southwest to settlement.

Since then he had read much of that region, and had suddenly made up his mind to visit it.

Indeed, he had already written to the Bishop who had it in charge, and received an encouraging reply.

He would have been soon gone, had he not received another letter from his own Bishop, begging him to serve on his cathedral staff for three

or four months at least, assuring him that his doing so would be a personal favor.

Having learned from the other Bishop that it would be better for him to not begin acclimatizing in the new country in summer, he acceded to this request.

Accordingly—when the time for which he had engaged was expiring, his Bishop saw how weary he was of the routine service which he had been performing, and did not press him to remain—accordingly, September was nearly gone when he stepped from the train at Whackston, having come over a branch which a main line had thrown out to that city, whose importance was greatly enhanced by the opening of the country south of it.

Whackston was then a very different city from what it is now. The streets were unpaved, some of them covered with—only the two principal of them entirely free, in the centre, from—prairie grass. There were no sidewalks—save, here and there, in front of a store or a saloon, a little stretch of boards, full of knotholes, nailed to slender scantlings—which was rather a platform to the door than a fraction of sidewalk—to be used cautiously, for it was apt to bob up at one end when a body stepped on the other. There was but one brick structure in the place—the Western Hotel. Most of the buildings were flimsy affairs—of the same

fourth-class lumber as the platforms in front of some of them. There was some cheap paint to be seen, where it would be most in evidence. Everything had a new, piney look and smell. The scent was in the air of the streets, but one got the full benefit of it when he entered one of the buildings-none of which were more than two-story, most of which were one-story, with a singular, useless projection of the siding of the front in the air, above the roof-which must have been intended to make the building look larger, but which deceived nobody, for the buildings did not stand close together, and the roof could be seen around each edge of this-what shall I call it? Emory dubbed it to himself, visor, for the sun-blistered fronts of the buildings made him think of the peeling face of an urchin, who blinks, but never thinks of turning down the front of his cap.

Emory was a deceptious fellow. His motions were rather slow and deliberate, when he was not excited. Most persons would have said that he was of the phlegmatic temperament. But, in fact, he was as restless as quicksilver.

Having been in Whackston before, he did not go to the Western Hotel, which the majority held to be the better, but to the Houston House, which may have come of the fact that he was constitutionally of the minority.

It stood a little to the east and south of where a long, wooden bridge crossed the Quicksand River, was painted a disagreeable yellow, and looked, standing on a slight rise of ground, the balloon that it was. It was so flimsy that it gave the impression that it was about to go up. The Whackston Hawk-whose snappy energy gave promise of what it came to be in the days of the great boom-spoke of it-its proprietor rather favoring The Clipper—as "a monument to the malicious falseness of what is said at the effete East with relation to our winds. More than a mild zephyr would take the Houston House to the Rockies, the Atlantic, or the Gulf of Mexico, and there she stands as if she were built of porphyry and founded on a rock!"

I have tried to convey an idea of it, because in it Emory had an adventure that has caused him to remember it through the years, and gave him a high place in its traditions while it stood, which it did till the great boom carried it away with the Whackston of which it was so prominent a part. But this adventure came in the evening, and before its occurrence he had seen the town, and had some rather unusual experiences.

Most persons, after the long, weary trip which had just ended for him, would have desired rest and quiet. But he, from a constitutional necessity of being always engaged, as well as from his journalistic habits, was disposed to look about.

He had arrived about the middle of the afternoon. When he had registered and made sure of his room, he went into the streets. What he saw in the way of architecture I have already intimated. The people whom he saw were mostly men. The few women abroad were painted. Evidently the matrons of the place remained within at that hour and kept their daughters with them. Most of the men wore broad-brimmed, light-colored felt hats-many of them banded with the skins of rattlesnakes. Their coats were of the sacque sort-not much more than roundabouts. About their waists were cartridge and revolverbelts. Their trousers were—as were the coats of many of them-of leather, fringed at the outer seams, coming to the ankles in some cases, in others entering the tops of boots-from the right of which, very often, stuck the wicked-looking handle of a knife. Many of them had a shortstepping, waddling walk. This was at least partially caused by the fact that the heels of their boots were high, slender and well in towards the centre of the foot. But their legs were bowed, and did not seem to be strong. They appeared to be unaccustomed to walking. From their language he concluded that they were not accustomed

to flying, or in training for that method of progress. Had there been need, for him the mystery would have been solved when one of them mounted. His impulse was to be in the saddle, and he was there! He uttered no word, made no sign, but a score of others mounted, also—or were on their ponies—so immediately after he was on his that they seemed to be astride almost simultaneously with him.

Then occurred what Emory happened to have not seen before. The mounted men took the reins in their mouths, sank their spurs-long and cruel ones-in their ponies' flanks, drew a revolver in each hand, and, swinging them about, yelling like fiends, dashed along, shooting in every direction. When they had gone a few blocks they turned and came back. They would swerve from one side of the street to the other, pause, dash aheadthey would move in involutions, evolutions, convolutions-without a word, or even a motion of command. They acted-not as individuals. They seemed to be governed by a corporate will—as is a flock of prairie cowbirds. The ponies did not obey the reins-for they hung loosely from the riders' mouths. They may have responded to a pressure from the knee or a touch from the heel. But the apparent corporate will seemed to be governing them in common with the ones whom

they were bearing. Apparently aimlessly the company would dash down a side street, to reappear on the main avenue, having passed around a block. The scene was barbaric, not to say savage—exciting. Emory was so absorbed by it that he allowed the rough-riders to pass him two or three times—regardless of the danger to which he was exposed—or, rather, feeling, subsconsciously, that there was more apparent than real recklessness in the shooting, that few, if any, of the balls were going where they were not deliberately sent. Finally, a hoarse voice cried: "Take care, there, tenderfoot!" and a ball whistled near his ear.

He darted around a building. As it was not the Western Hotel, it was, of course, frame. He would have felt more comfortable had it not been so full of knot-holes. Others had been wiser than he; for in glancing up and down the street, as he took shelter, he saw that it was empty of all but the horsemen. The cowboys had started in to run the town, and they were doing it—with opposition from nobody.

They galloped back and forth once, after Emory's retreat. Then the thunder of their ponies' feet was heard on the bridge spanning the Quicksand, and they were off to the vast herds of cattle on the open prairies to the west. As soon as they were gone the main avenue was again

crowded, and its picturesque life—in which mingled capitalists, cattle-men, desperadoes and blanketed Indians—went on as usual.

In studying this life—walking up and down, dropping into places where clergymen do not commonly go, such as saloons, dance-halls, gambling-hells, shooting-galleries—Emory spent a couple of hours. For the time, interested in the scenes among which he found himself—(from the fact that he was a trained item-hunter, and from his natural disposition)—he did not think of being in orders. It was always so with him. He was always shocking the clerical proprieties.

When he returned to the Houston House, the last call to supper had been given. When he stepped into the office the landlord in person approached him and advised him of this fact. He did not take the time to go to his room, but went to the public toilet, washed his hands, dried them on a somewhat fresh common towel, and entered the dining-room.

Most of the chairs were occupied. After some delay he found himself seated, his back to the wall, at the farther end of the room. Opposite him sat a typical cold-gray-eyed, long-haired badman. As he was ordering, he was aware that the bad-man was eyeing him. The Scotch Highlander of the day of James II. did not take offense more

easily than did the Southern gentlemen among whom he was reared and from a long line of whom he came. He eyed the bad-man. The bad-man became aggressive. Taking the cruet and reaching it to Emory, he said:

"Have some vinegar?"

"Thank you."

"Have some salt?" reaching the cellar.

"No, sir!"

"Have some pepper?" reaching the shaker.

"No!!"

"Then I'll pepper you!" drawing both of his revolvers at once and pointing them at Emory, with a flood of profanity at which I would not dare to even hint.

Emory's heart rose in his throat, and he could feel his cheeks blanch. But as long as one is aware of the rising of his heart and the blanching of his cheeks he is not overcome by fear, his faculties are not absolutely paralyzed, he may, at least, remember. There popped into his mind an incident of his early boyhood. His mother was warning him against ever losing his self-respect. Upon his asking her what she meant, she replied: "Never let anybody who hasn't the right make you do anything!" His spirit strengthened. He felt that his tormenter felt the steadying of his look between the muzzles. But the bad-man had the drop

on the tenderfoot, and intended to make the most of it! He said:

"Have some vinegar!"

"No!"

Both the revolvers went off, and the balls passed Emory's ears, and went through the wall behind him.

"Some salt?"

"No!"

Two more balls passed Emory's ears.

"Some pepper?"

"No!"

Again the revolvers were discharged.

"Allow me to press my hospitality. Some vine-gar?"

"No!"

Two more balls nearer the ears.

"Salt?"

"No!"

Two more balls. still nearer the ears.

"Pepper?"

"No!"

Two more balls, so near the ears that they were stung.

The bad-man's revolvers were now empty.

Saying to Emory: "You're a good one!" he proceeded to reload. He would probably have been more cautious had not Emory been a tenderfoot.

As it was, he laid one revolver by his plate while he charged the chambers of the other. This done—as his mind turned to the one—Emory darted his hand across the table, snatched the other, and had him.

Everybody in the dining-room had recognized the character of the shooting, seen that he was in no danger from it, and remained. Others had come in. So there was a copious witnessing of what followed.

Covering the bad-man, Emory said:

"Please accept my thanks for your attentiveness, and allow me to return it! Have some pepper?"

The bad-man took some, without hesitation, and with a smile, which was somewhat sickly.

"Have some more?"

The bad-man took some more, sneezing violently—to the amusement of the crowd.

"Have some salt?"

The bad-man took some.

"Take a handful!"

The bad-man swallowed at least a tablespoon-ful.

"Now, having eaten, you need a digester! Have some vinegar. It is of old vintage!"

The bad-man gulped down a mouthful.

"Drink again! Stand and drink! Pledge the company!"

He did so; then looked at Emory, sheepishly-

in a way which asked:

"What's next?"

Emory replied:

"I hope, sir, that you have enjoyed our meeting as much as I have! I shall ever remember it as one of the delightful events of my life! I shall keep this"—fingering the revolver—"as a souvenir! I'm hungry. Waiter, you remember my order!"

"Yes, sah!"

The bad-man did not wait to finish the supper, in the midst of which he had stopped for the fun—which he got.

CHAPTER IX.

THE STOMACH AND THE HEAD.

But Emory was only passing through Whackston. He had seen the Bishop in charge of the new Southwest, and was on his way to the post to which he had been assigned—Breezemead—in the Butternut Valley-which fertile valley-fertile in fact, well, as according to the abundantly illustrated, heavily capitalized and brilliantly colored circulars which had been scattered over the East-one of which had fallen under Emory's eye and taken his attention because it had a quotation from his last newspaper article—which valley had been swept clean of its Indian owners, not without pretext, of course, but really on the ground that "might makes right"-something at which Emory had hinted in copy-which hint could not have appeared in quotation on a circular, or elsewhere, as it had perished from that slashing editorial weapon—the blue-pencil.

These circulars had had the desired effect.

Emory had seen and heard evidences everywhere that the Butternut Valley was rapidly filling with a desirable class of settlers.

There had been a rush to it at the first. It is in human nature—especially in the American human nature—to try the new thing. How much man has in common with the lower animal! The better pasture is over the fence. If you want your cattle to eat clover hay rather than timothy, give them plenty of timothy, and build a fence about the clover—a fence under which they can get their heads. When you take it down you will be fortunate if they do not founder themselves on what they would not have cared for had it not been for the fence.

Though occasional violation of the prohibition was winked at—no doubt, that those who "spied out the land" might bring back a glowing report, as such spies always do, a bunch of wild grapes as long as the finger appearing to them more luscious than the finest Concords, and, at least, as long as a rail, and three inches of soil looking to be three feet—though, I say, occasional violation of the prohibition was winked at, yet in the statute, made and provided, no one was allowed to enter the Butternut Valley or any other portion of the new Southwest, after it was decided that it should be opened to settlement, before a fixed date.

To enforce this prohibition, a cordon of soldiers was placed, weeks before the opening. Thousands pressed upon this thin line. This was especially true from the north. There for miles canvas-covered wagons and tents covered the prairies. Long before the breaking of the day of the opening, tents were folded, teams were hitched, and the horses' noses were over the line of demarkation. The moment arrived. The rush was frightful. The wheels of wagons locked-men shouted and sworewomen screamed—children cried. Horsemen darted ahead, and made mad rushes for specially desirable claims—the locations of which were remarkably well known, taking into account the statute definitely intended, and supposed to be enforced, against such knowledge. Under such circumstances it may be too much to expect that the average "miserable sinner" will be over-regardful of the truth or the law-not being under special pledge to respect it. But the guards forming the cordon? Well, a drink in a dry country, or the rustle of a bill, or the blink of bright eyes, has a peculiarly blinding effect on eyes which are clear enough when an armed enemy is to be looked at, expected, or even a possibility.

In many cases these riders had their trouble for their pains—found the claim for which they made already staked out. Though the name did not come till later, there were "sooners" in the land.

As is known, all this occurred nearly three years before the morning which succeeded Emory's adventure with the bad-man; an account of it is in place here from the fact that it was refreshed in his memory by a character to whom the reader shall be immediately introduced, and under circumstances which shall at once appear.

I have already intimated that Whackston was reached by rail. Breezemead was still some fifty or sixty miles south, and reached by stage.

Upon the morning in mind, Emory was up early—earlier than necessary—though the stage started early. He had not slept much. He had been nervous at retiring, and had remained so over night. This came, not so much of the adventure—though that was surely enough to make him nervous—as of the imagining of what the effect of the report of it—and the facts would lose none of their picturesqueness in *The Hawk*—might have upon the Bishop and upon the wardens, vestrymen, communicants and parishioners generally of the church which he was upon his way to serve.

He was standing on the veranda of the Houston House when the stage approached, swung round and brought up with a flourish.

It was a heavy, covered affair, but ran lightly. The six slender, quick-footed, and powerful horses which drew it were driven by a short, heavy-set man, whose foot was on the lever of the brake, whose features were remarkably like those of Phil Sheridan, whose long and firm upper lip, as it rose slightly and fell over great, even teeth, none of which was missing, made one think of the awning over a window of a hardware-store. When he had brought them to a standstill by a resonant "Whoa!" and fondled them with enough profanity to last an ordinary Eastern man a lifetime, he called out, commandingly:

"All aboard!"

There were enough passengers to a little more than comfortably fill the coach. A traveling-man, who was evidently accustomed to this mode of traveling, caught the tire of a front wheel and put a foot on the hub, as if he would mount to a seat beside the driver. He was stopped by that dignitary's touching him with the whip-handle, and saying:

"Not so fast!—that's the man, this trip!" bringing the handle round towards Emory—much to Emory's surprise, who had not met him.

But the landlord said: "That's right, Jim!" and to Emory:

"He wants to honor you! Let him! He's King of the road!"

So Emory clambered to the seat which had been

coveted by the drummer—to admire—as they started, as they passed down the main avenue, during the whole trip, in fact—the way in which the King—the name which the landlord had used fitted perfectly—handled the lines, the whip, and the horses—each of whom he knew, not only by name, but to his minutest physical and mental characteristic. And they knew him—as was evident from the way in which they responded when he spoke—to one peremptorily, to another admonishingly, to another encouragingly—to each, sooner or later, caressingly. It was a delight to see him throw out the long, plaited lash of the whip and touch any one of them on any spot of the person that his eye had chosen.

He was full of reminiscences of each of them. For instance, he said:

"Hoax—the off leader—is the finest saddle horse a man need want to straddle. If I'm the owner of anything—which I would be if I had the mortgages paid off—I owe it to him. I rode him all over this country while it belonged to the Indians. I was in it, with him, most of the time the would-be settlers were being held back. I had to do a lot of hoaxing to keep from being driven out, for I hadn't much money, and only the privates of the guard came cheap. He became about as good a hoaxer as I was. You can see for yourself that

he is as full of motion as a wren. But when I stood by him in the high grass waiting for a chance to slip by a sentinel, as I did many times, he was as quiet as a dove. And when I thought I saw my chance, he would seem to understand, and move with a slyness and a precaution which would have been creditable to a fox. Now and then a squad of soldiers would be sent into the forbidden district to see that it was free from invaders. Once I thought I was a goner. I was shielded from view by a roll in the prairie. Dismounting, I took off his saddle and bridle and said to him: 'Go, and come back when the danger is passed!' -without the slightest notion that he would understand my sentence—though I have known lower animals who were capable of that-but not without hope that a word or two might convey to him what I wanted him to do. Having laid his snout on my shoulder, touched my cheek with his, and given a low whinny, he trotted to the top of the roll, stood there for a moment, then head and tail in air, with a snort, started suddenly, at a gallop, athwart the course of the bluecoats. When they came within view of where I lay in the wild rye, they were looking at him as he flew away. They showed no disposition to follow him. That would have been useless. The important thing to

me was that he had taken their attention in a direction away from me."

"Do you think he intended to do so?" asked

Emory.

After a moment's hesitation, the King replied: "During my last year in Yale—you don't look astonished!"

"No," replied Emory. "When I had heard you speak half a dozen words I did not need to be told that you were an educated man. And I have knocked about enough to know that in this country, especially at the West, one may find a man of education in any position—not that I think that handling the lines over such a team as the one before us is an occupation beneath anyone!"

The King first looked grim, as there are few men of mind and sensibility who do not in glancing back through their lives—caught his breath sharply, in remembering some particular experience—then smiled in response to the compliment to his horses, and said:

"I paid more attention to psychology than I did to the curriculum. I have had to unlearn things that I accepted then. Nobody can associate with the lower animals as intimately as I have during the past thirty years without finding that there is more in them than the books are willing to allow. But what's the use? Whether Hoax intended to take attention away from where I lay in the wild rye or not, he did so effectively. And what is more, when the enemy was out of sight he came back to me, whinnied joyfully when he reached me, and sighed with satisfaction as I rebridled and saddled and mounted him!"

"All that would indicate reason!" said Emory.

The King shook his head affirmatively, but seemed indisposed to commit himself more fully on that point, and changed the subject to safer ground by saying:

"He has a wonderful instinct. We were once close pressed. The guard was so on the alert that I feared that if I made for the north we would be taken. So I headed for the west. This I did trusting to the favor of accident, for there was no point south of the bridge at Whackston where it was known that the Quicksand could be crossed. The squad saw us, and, as you see, the character of the country is such that we could not keep out of its sight for long. It thought it had us, by deploying so that by a rush we could be kept from escaping to the north—had there been any hope in that direction—or to the south. I did the only thing to be done under the circumstances-kept straight ahead. When the river was reached Hoax seemed indisposed to stop. He took the water at the roots of a cottonwood and left it at another

tree of the same sort, having gone directly across. Those trees have been my guides in crossing many a time since." Not knowing that he might not desire to be guided by them some time, realizing that any information may at some point in his experiences be beneficial to anyone, and from journalistic habit, Emory kept an eye out for them all day—which was possible from the fact that through the whole drive they were never out of sight of the valley of the Quicksand.

Now he said:

"The time of the opening of this region to settlement must have been a very interesting one!"

"Yes," answered the King.

Then came the refreshing of memory to Emory, of which I have spoken—which concluded with:

"Those were the days! and the least interesting of them was not the day of the actual opening!"

"I found it absorbing!" said Emory.

"What, were you here?"

"Yes; as correspondent for The Western Finder."

"Then you wrote that article from which the quotations were made for the circulars which went East!"

"Yes."

"Well, I was a member of the committee which composed those circulars, and—a thing which I

would rather you should not mention—did all the work! I thought you must have had training outside a theological seminary!"

"Well done!" exclaimed Emory—indisposed to bring theological seminaries under criticism.

They were crossing the narrow, wooded valley of a sluggish stream, and the driver had knocked from an ear of the near leader with the cracker of the lash, one of those triangular flies which in this region so pester animals in such places—knocked it off without touching the ear enough to more than make the horse slightly shake his head, in a way which seemed to indicate rather pleasure at relief from the fly than pain from the stroke.

"You're certainly an expert with your whip,
Mr. ——!"

"Cheese the mister! I'm simply driver, or Jim-"

"Or King!" interjected Emory.

The King nodded, smiled and went on:

"And I ought to know how to handle the whip!
I've been using it long enough!"

As, some time later, they were approaching the dinner-station, Emory said:

"I notice that you never more than touch your horses. I haven't seen you strike one of them yet!"

The reply was: "I'd strike one of them soon

enough and hard enough, did he need it! And they know it! Maybe that's the reason I don't have to strike oftener. I don't like to strike. They may know that, too. And it may make them the more willing to serve me. Horses are persons!"

When they came out from dinner, Emory saw that another team was to draw them farther south.

They had not been long on the road when he remarked to the King:

"I see that you know these fellows, their names and peculiarities, as well as you did those whom we have left."

The King replied: "Were I the boss of a gang of men, don't you suppose I'd study them, to find out what was in each of them?"

This was his sermon on his statement, before dinner, that "horses are persons," and it was long enough, and complete of its kind.

That day's ride with the King was an event in the life of the Reverend Mr. Emberson. He often speaks of it. A strong, sweet wind blew from the south—as it does constantly in that region, at that season of the year—with the salt odors of the distant Gulf of Mexico faintly upon it; the sky was deep and warm; the prairie grasses waved over wide reaches of undulations; the wild rye nodded by the trail; an eagle mounted, became a speck,

disappeared; a hawk sailed on level, still wings on the horizon; herds of cattle with long, wide horns were met and passed; occasionally there was a ranch with corrals and fields of corn. Everything was open and free.

He felt kinship with the eagle which he watched for hours—till it was lost to sight.

After crossing the stream in the bottom of which the King flipped the fly with the cracker, the trail wound "to the lay of the land" over uplands till towards evening, when it descended abruptly into the valley of the Butternut, at a point a mile or so west of Breezemead.

Before beginning this descent, Emory nodded his head over his right shoulder and asked:

"Hoax's trees?"—concluding that two which stood some distance apart several miles to the west must be they—which seemed a natural conclusion from the fact that they were the only ones of considerable size which had been seen on the Quicksand since Whackston was left.

"Do you expect that they'll be of service to you?" asked the King drily.

"No telling! But a newspaper man is thankful for any knowledge!"

"I hope the newspapers won't get hold of this!"

"No; I'm out of the business; and weren't

As—Emory having spoken somewhat warmly of ts being as much the duty of a newspaper man to respect a confidence as it is of another man—the King replied: "As that, for instance, of a horse-thief to respect his neighbor's ownership of property which can carry itself away!"—they reached their destination.

It was about six o'clock, when, to the crackling of the King's whip, in a cloud of dust, they rolled up to the Adnogal House—the yellow of which was so exactly and unpleasantly that of the Houston House that the thought crossed Emory's mind that they must have been painted from the same pot.

The arrival of the stage from the north, in which direction lay civilization, was a great event in the town, which—as Emory heard every one of its inhabitants to whom he talked say—was not to be "sneezed at" in comparison with Whackston, as it was something like half as large and had two brick buildings. One of these was the Crowley County Bank.

Within an hour after his arrival, having washed up a bit, Emory walked into this bank—to the president of which he carried a letter from the Bishop—addressed to "Mr. Martin Bynson, Senior Warden of St. John's Church."

He was received kindly.

Excepting that he had the bank official's smile—that smile which parts and widens the lips as if they were worked by a string pulled by somebody back in the head—as maybe they are—excepting this smile—which caused Emory to think of how much men of the same calling are alike whether found in the great city or in the little shanty frontier town—he liked Mr. Bynson—who immediately took him out and introduced him to the junior warden and two or three of the leading vestrymen.

The junior warden was a Mr. Samuel M. Nothym—whose face was very striking, from the fact that it was full of blue freckles—the result, Emory learned afterwards, of the explosion of a gun—which came about in so interesting a way, and throws so much light upon Mr. Nothym's character, that it seems to me that it would be inartistic to not give an idea of it here.

Though married, Mr. Nothym had come alone to Breezemead and opened a hardware store. Alone in the store—where he slept—he one night, heard, or imagined he heard, burglars attempting to make entrance. He seized his shotgun and tried to fire. It would not go off. It was an old-fashioned, tubed gun. Some insisted that in his hurry he had forgotten there was no cap on the tube. Be that as it may, he cocked it and let the

hammer down half a dozen times without its discharging. He was in a desperate hurry. He must make a warlike noise. It was winter, and there was one of those cold snaps which will come even in the Butternut Valley. The heating stove was red hot. He jerked back the hammer and placed the tube as nearly as possible on the hottest spot. And—the gun more than went off. When the night-watchman broke in he found Mr. Nothym on the floor, unconscious. He was soon about, as well as ever, but his face was thereafter blotched and mottled to an extent that was startling to one meeting him for the first time.

And for another reason, it might as well be added, his face was striking. It was cleanly shaven, save for a goatee—not where a goatee belongs—in the centre of the lower lip and chin—but to one side. He shaved himself, and could never keep from leaving some hairs at the right and severing some to the left.

The first vestryman to whom Mr. Bynson introduced Emory was Doctor Gray—whose distinguishing characteristics were light blue eyes, intensely red hair and full beard, fiery face, and teeth double in front as well as back, wide apart, as firmly set as the merlons of the parapet of a feudal castle, all showing in a full yet snickering laugh, suggesting a stubborn and cruel nature. Yet there

was the indication of the possibility of affection in his look. Emory thought:

"A dangerous enemy, but a friend who would stand by you through thick and thin!"

The other vestrymen to whom the new clergyman was introduced were of the rank and file order—who would follow the lead of such men as the senior warden and Doctor Gray; so nothing further need be said about them.

The introductions over, Mr. Bynson walked to the Adnogal with the new-comer, saying, among other things, on the way:

"Whackston has the start. But it isn't in the Butternut Valley! Here Breezemead has the first place. Then it is the county seat of Crowley County! True, the county seat question is again before the people—through the treachery of our State representatives and senator, or their foolishness—I don't know that it matters much which—though I confess that I prefer a scoundrel to a fool. Our rival for the county seat is Centreville, which is always harping on being in the exact geographical centre of the county!"

Emory laughed, saying:

"The stomach is in about the centre of a man's physical organization; but that isn't an overwhelmingly good reason why it should run him rather than the head!"

Mr. Bynson gave him a quick glance, and, the veranda of the Adnogal now reached, said, as he turned away:

"There is no reason why the church here should not succeed!"

CHAPTER X.

DUCKS AND PRAIRIE CHICKENS.

To be a successful journalist one must have at least five characteristics. He must be curious, have a nose as quick and infallible for an item as that of a lurcher for a rabbit, be restless, have the appearance of being ever content, and be capable of saying a great deal in a few words.

If I haven't shown that these characteristics were compounded in Emory, I hope that I may have done so before this history is completed.

Soon after parting from Mr. Bynson, he was sitting at supper at the table with the landlord's daughter, Miss ——. But allow me to reserve her name till she becomes an actress in this history.

One seeing him would have said that there was nothing to be desired by him.

Upon rising from table, he stepped into the office, lighted a cigar, thought of how an old city

editor had said to him: "Stick to the lead pencil! Don't spoil a good journalist by making of yourself a poor parson!" and went out for a stroll—to see something of the town into which he had dropped.

Catching a glimpse of the court house—Breeze-mead's other brick building—he walked towards it. It and the jail were the two buildings on a plaza. As he was approaching it from the main part of the town, he was surprised that he had to pass the jail to reach it, and that it fronted the other way. But he was no longer surprised when he reached a point from which he could see that the houses upon which it looked were evidently those of the most wealthy of the community. How on earth could a new community develop without money? And how can there be money without its being in the hands of the few? And must not these few enjoy a certain immunity from the law? Else how can money run and be glorified?

Some such questions as these were running over each other in his mind, when his attention was taken by a drawling exclamation:

"H-ell-o, Em!"

"Hello, Hugh!" he responded, starting forward, and reaching out his hand impulsively. "I didn't expect this pleasure! I knew that you had followed the westering sun, but I didn't know where he had led you!"

" The surgery

He turned and retraced his steps with Hugh Charles—a relative—his senior by several years.

He was a character. He had served through the Civil War-in which he might have risen to high things had he had ambition. The war over, he re-entered school-where he had distinguished himself as a boy. He not only learned quickly, but saw principles. He had money, and the law, medicine and the priesthood were open to him. Before an audience words had no trouble in leaving his mouth, and he spoke as one inspired. He wrote with elegance. He was one of the finest Shakespearean scholars of his time—which, taking into account his youth, was remarkable, and could only be accounted for by knowing and remembering the character of his mind, that he was not overly given to the pleasures of the mess, and that on march and in bivouac the plays of the greatest of literary geniuses, were his library. Through a paper which he wrote, left upon his desk, and which a professor found and published, his fame got abroad, and he was consulted by savants and literati from all quarters on the use of the English tongue. Some of the letters of these men he answered, but to most of them he paid no attention. It was suggested that he go into mercantile life. He did so-without the slightest interest. It need

not be said that he failed. With the remnant of his patrimony and what had accumulated to his credit during the war—he had never gone to the trouble to draw his pay—he drifted away and—at the opening of the new Southwest—settled on a worthless upland claim—because he rather liked the sunset from where he had accidentally pitched his camp. How many lives have set in the Great American Desert—have set when they should have been rising!

As they walked Hugh said:

"I was looking for you!"

"You knew that I was coming!"

"Yes."

"How?"

In reply, Hugh took from his pocket a copy of The Daily Whackston Hawk.

Reaching for it, Emory said: "I have been anxious to see that! I inquired for it this morning, but it seems that it is not out before the stage starts," and asked: "How did it get here?"

"It comes by a buckboard, which is sent down by a shorter route than that taken by the stage."

While the question was being answered—which took considerable time in Hugh's drawl—Emory was taking in the following headlines, which were printed in large, full-faced capitals:

SAFE?

NOT ALWAYS-

TO TACKLE A TENDERFOOT—
EVEN IF HE IS A PREACHER!
THE REV. EMORY M. EMBERSON!

WE SHOULD HAVE HIM IN WHACKSTON!

BUT HE'S NEEDED IN BREEZEMEAD!

A MAN WHO WILL SUCCEED ANYWHERE!

HOW BLINK-EYED TOM OF THE COWSKIN MET HIS

MATCH!

A BEECHER'S BIBLE WELL HANDLED!

The story thus startlingly introduced was as startling. It gave an astonishing account of Emory. It spoke of him as a graduate of two American, one French and three German universities. Young as he was, he had been offered the rectorate of Old Trinity, in New York City. He had been elected a Bishop, but had declined the honor that he might devote himself to Sanskrit, which difficult language he read and wrote as well as he did English, and spoke as a native! No one in the whole history of the West had shown more nerve than he did, when covered by the revolvers of Blink-Eyed Tom-the worst man in the past ten years' history of the frontier-who upon the morning of the very day of his running up against Mr. Emberson caused his twelfth victim, since he has been amongst us, to bite the dust. Those who were present when the young clergyman's hand darted out for the bad-man's gun did not see it; it moved so quickly that it could not be followed by the human vision. And the man under whose eye such a bad-man quails must have a strong, a bold and a steady glance, which means business.

"What effect will this confounding affair, and the still more confounding account of it have, Hugh?" asked Emory, with a sick smile.

"You're a made man!" drawled Hugh, with a long-drawn smile, which showed that he had been West long enough to feel the same admiration for Emory's promptness and grit that had evidently been felt by the reporter.

"What are you going to do this evening?" asked Emory, a corner reached at which Hugh said he must turn off.

With a smile which was secretive and full of humor, Hugh answered:

"We'r-e out West here, E-m, and we don't tell ev-eryb-o-dy what we're g-o-ing to do!"

With a laugh, Emory said:

"If you have time, come round to the Adnogal House this evening, and we'll have a chat over old times and about the folk!"

"A-ll r-ight!" drawled Hugh. "Maybe I can come for a little bit—early. I'll be engaged

later," and moved away with his head down, which was his way of carrying that important part of his anatomy, and a quick, uneven step, which was in singular contrast with his slow and drawling speech.

When Hugh came, Emory was sitting in the office, smoking. He arose, greeted his guest, and led the way upstairs, into an oblong room, some six feet one way by ten the other, with no furniture save a single bed, a straight-backed chair and a wash-stand. The walls were of plain, pine boards, the carpet was of cheap, two-ply, strikingly figured ingrain, and there was but one narrow window, of eight by ten panes for light and ventilation. This was Emory's room. He could not but think of how roastingly hot it would be in the summer. But in this autumn weather it was not uncomfortable in the particular of heat.

The conversation was soon reminiscent. Emory spoke of those who had gone from the family ranks in the years that Hugh had been away. It is wonderful how tender, and simple, and boy-like men become in such talks! But with a young man this cannot last long. When, upon some slight suggestion, his attention turned to the future, Emory, who had thrown himself on the bed, rose to his elbow, as the light of anticipated conquests, and yearnings for conflict, came to his eyes. Hugh

looked at him, understood his spirit, thought, with a pitiful grin: "How the boy will be disappointed!" said: "You always were something on looking ahead, Em!" and asked: "Do you remember that once, in a conversation which we had on the subject of your becoming a clergyman, you said that when the time came you would marry me?"

Emory nodded.

"Well, the t-i-m-e's come!"

"The thunder you say!" exclaimed Emory, sitting up, coming with a jolt to the present, and forgetting that he was a clergyman.

At this Hugh had a slow convulsion of laughter. As it abated somewhat he said:

"I've found a prairie chicken! Whether you'll like her or not I don't know—nor do I care a continental! She s-u-i-t-s me!"

At this Emory also had a convulsion of laughter. As it passed, he said:

"Certainly-I'll marry you! What's the date!"

"Not definitely settled yet," answered Hugh, and then asked, with his long-drawn grin, through which appeared the solemnity with which a man who is engaged always asks such a question of another man: "I presume you know what a serious matter fixing the date is, Em?"

"No," was the reply, "my thought with relation to marriage has never gone that far!"

"But it will! This is a great country for bringing such subjects to one's mind. It may be in the air. I think it's in the air, the earth and the sky. The prairies are so still! One's soul gets full of all sorts of great sentiments. He wants someone to whom he can try to express them—not a companion, not a friend—each of whom is well enough, in his way, and place—but another—ahem!—self."

As Hugh drawled this out, there was something infinitely funny in it to Emory. He threw himself on the broad of his back in another convulsion of laughter. When he was recovering, he heard Hugh saying:

"You may laugh, my boy, but you'll experience what I mention, and then you'll be making up to a chicken!"

"But," said Emory, as he wiped his eyes, "I won't be on the prairies; I'll be in town!"

"Yes," said Hugh, "but isn't the town on the prairies? And you'll not always be in the town. When you're out of it, alone—then the prairies will sink under you, rise about you, envelop you—then you will feel their vastness, their stillness—then they will suggest all sorts of immense things to you. After that you will not be able to stay off them!"

Emory, who had again sat up, said meditatively:

"I rode down on the outside of the stage to-day, and may have had a hint of what you mean!"

Hugh looked into his deep, retrospective and introspective eyes, and said:

"They've gripped you already, old fellow! And there are chickens on every one of them. And one of them will 'git yo' shuah,' as Aunt Mary used to tell us about the hobgoblins when our morality wasn't up to her standard. By the way, you haven't told me yet—is the dear old soul still in the black flesh?"

After some reminiscences of Aunt Mary and Uncle Dave, and other ebony belongings and friends of their childhood, Emory's mind came back to the matter of matrimony, of which all young men think more than they are willing to admit, of which they are apt to talk, half jocularly, half seriously, when they are in a tender mood, as who is not when he is reminiscential? He said:

"For three years I had been knocking about the country in journalism. I had not been still long enough for thought of taking a wife to have time to form in my mind. And then it was too late. I was married to my profession!"

Hugh grinned his long-drawn grin.

This Emory, having looked away in his earnestness, did not notice. He continued:

"I believe in a celibate priesthood. The priest

should not 'entangle himself with the affairs of this world.' He should look upon his people as his family. His life should be lonely, so that anybody can confide in him, with the settled feeling that what is said to him will not, by any accident, escape from him, even in his sleep. He should be ready to respond to any order from his superiorto any demand of the service. There should be no one liable to the contraction of a disease from him -for that one's sake, for his own sake, and that he may not be tempted to neglect the afflicted. He is vowed to poverty. So his support of a family must be meagre, and in case of his disabling those dependent upon him are left in need-without the hope that they whom he may have served will feel any obligation to aid them!"

Hugh's grin was longer-drawn and his drawl still more pronounced in:

"In the elegant parlance of this region, 'Cheese it!' Such fine theories may withstand the ducks of the effete East, but you will find them to be not even cobwebs to the prairie chickens of the young and vigorous West. But"—forgetting his drawl, or losing it—"I must go!"

"What's your hurry? It's been a good while since we met, and I feel that our talk has orly begun!"

"I feel that way, too, Em! But you know, I'm

an old soldier! Duty, and all that, that you've been talking about. I'm on watch to-night, from twelve to two."

"On watch! Where? Over what? You're not in danger from the Indians, are you?"

"No; but the Centrevillians-"

"Mayn't I stand the watch with you?"

"That wouldn't be soldierly! Go to bed and get a good sleep! Good night!"

And Hugh was gone—with that energy of which a slow man is capable, when he has something really important in hand.

Emory's journalistic olfactories were excited. He had scented an item.

CHAPTER XI.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH EDITOR WALKER?

Why should he care for the item of which he had gotten the scent? Item-hunting had become a second nature to him. Then he wanted to succeed in Breezemead, and knew that any knowledge with regard to it, or any individual, or set of individuals, in it, may prove a step in the direction of success in a community-no matter what that direction may be-the same factors making to success in ecclesiastical affairs that do so in those of politics or business. He thought that such knowledge was the only thing necessary to him for success in his new field—that his recent experiences as a rector had made him wise-wise enough, at least, to not allow the impulses of his nature to run away with him-whether he was right in which conclusion the subsequent events of this history will show.

Had Hugh gone away at not later than a quarter

of eleven o'clock, that he might get a nap before he entered upon his watch? He did not look sleepy, or fatigued. Before going he had several times consulted his watch, as one does when he has a particular engagement. What sort of an one would he be likely to have?

One of gallantry? He was still a young man. But in the old days he had been thought a misogynist. Those who knew him well knew better. As his slow smiles and long-drawn grins would intimate, he was secretive and capable of making misogynistic remarks for the purpose for which a certain fish emits an inky fluid. But he was faithful. He had passed his word to his prairie chicken, and he would keep it! He was neither a roysterer or a gamester. So he could not have hurried away to a drinking bout, to the card-table any more than to an assignation.

Emory knew his man.

The item which he had scented was not that there was a county seat contest between Breeze-mead and Centreville; for Mr. Bynson and Mr. Nothym, and Doctor Gray and Hugh had spoken freely of that—it was the open and absorbing burden of conversation about the Adnogal House, on the streets, wherever, indeed, he had heard people express themselves—but the plan upon which that contest was being conducted by the

Breezemeadians—that was the thing to be found out.

That there was such a plan there could be no doubt. Nor could there be any doubt that of those who had formed it, and had it in hand, were the men whom I have mentioned—including Hugh, who, when they had met on the plaza had made no answer to Emory's question:

"What are you doing here?"

Upon his returning to the Adnogal House, Emory had remarked to the landlord upon the pleasure he had experienced in meeting his relative, upon learning whose name the landlord had said:

"The Assistant County Clerk!"

That was something which Emory knew Hugh was not apt to be; for he had always had a horror of sedentary life. When Emory spoke to him of his position, he smiled and grinned.

He was no more than gone, when all these things darted through Emory's mind. He jumped to the conclusion that there was to be a meeting of the leaders, put on his hat and followed into the hall-way. He could hear feet slowly descending the thinly carpeted stairs. He was about to continue following, when the descent suddenly stopped. Soon began a cautious ascent. The feet were stepping lightly. He had closed the door after him, so that the light from the kerosene lamp in

his room—the hallway was unlighted—might not reveal him, and now he could not open it without a click of the latch, which would sound plainly through all the halls and rooms of the upper story of the flimsily constructed building.

As he had not lost a sound of the footsteps from their crossing the sill of his door, the ascender could be no one but Hugh. Suppose he should retrace his footsteps to that point! There were three other avenues open to him—the other direction in that hallway, or either direction in one which crossed it at right angles. Which would he take? Horrors! He was coming towards where Emory was making himself as small as possible. What was he to do? He could not open the door of his room, for had the latch been of the best make, and thoroughly oiled, the light from within, it will be remembered, would have betraved There was but one thing to do-to keep ahead. This he did, without the slightest notion of where he was going, or what he was approaching. There were doors to his right and left. He was tempted to open one of them. But he did not know into what presence he might come, or what reception might await him; and an arrest for burglary would not be a desirable induction into his new parish. So he kept in advance, taking his chances, with a not very quiet mind.

At the extreme end of the corridor was a large stove, which, in a cold snap—as Emory afterwards noticed—was necessary for heating purposes—not so much for the comfort of the guests as to save the crockery, by preventing the water from freezing in the narrow-mouthed pitchers with which the rooms were provided—that being long before the introduction of the reservoir system, for which Breezemead is, in later years, so justly celebrated.

Behind this stove Emory popped. And just in time. He was barely out of sight when a door, within half a dozen feet of him, opened, the end of the hallway filled with light, and a magnificently proportioned man stepped out. Emory gasped in realizing how nearly the light had caught him, and how little he was in advance of Hugh, when the latter emerged from the darkness, and said, softly:

"Hello, Erskine!"

"Hello, yourself, Hugh!" was the answer, in a muffled, deep bass voice. "I was growing impatient!"

"Growing impatient! Are you ever a-n-y-thing else, Dick?"

"Why the devil can't people be on time?"

As they entered—Emory could see well into the room—Hugh pulled his watch, glanced at it, and said:

"The hour agreed upon was eleven, and it's now ten-fifty!"

"That so! Thought it must be midnight, any-way!"

By eleven o'clock about a dozen men were assembled. They had come one at a time, and not less cautiously than had Hugh. Among them were Mr. Bynson, Mr. Nothym, Doctor Gray and the landlord, Mr. Gurnsey. Everybody was smoking, excepting Mr. Bynson and Mr. Gurnsey, who singularly enough for Western men, did not burn the weed.

When the last man who was expected was come, and they had exchanged some pleasantries—which could hardly have been more picturesque, Hugh being addressed as "Mud"; Mr. Bynson as "Soap," sometimes "Soft Soap"; Doctor Gray as "Fire"; Mr. Nothym as "Blue" or "Mottle"; Mr. Erskine as "Tub"; and Mr. Gurnsey as "Tombstones"—when the last man was come, Hugh made as if he would close the door.

"Is that necessary?" asked Mr. Bynson, with a cough.

With a cough also, which was not the less violent from its being sympathetic, Mr. Gurnsey answered:

"I have had all the rooms on this hallway left

vacant, this side the one occupied by the new preacher."

"He's a good one!" said Dick. "Besides what was said about him in *The Hawk*, he was the subject of a conversation between me and the King. Too bad he's a preacher! He'd be a valuable recruit!"

"Don't worry about his being a preacher, Tub!" said Hugh. "You bet your boots that if we get in a tight place and send for him, he'll come, if he thinks we're n-o-t i-n the w-r-o-n-g of it! I know his history and his blood!"

"Good for you, Mud!" laughed Dick. "Some relation of yours, isn't he?"

In his most pronounced drawl, with his longest grin, and with a certain remoteness of tone, Hugh replied:

"I am delighted that I am able to say that his mother and mine are sisters!"

"Oh, come off your perch, Mud!" was Dick's response. "Don't be chilly! I've been intending to ask you to present me to his reverence. I tell you there's stuff in the man, preacher or sinner, who can call the turn on Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cowskin!"

"All right!" said Hugh.

And the business began.

During its transaction Emory found his situa-

tion unpleasant in more regards than one. In the first place, his position was cramped. He did not dare to move. His feet were soon going to sleep. That could not be helped. More than one man in the room into which he could see was accustomed to Indian warfare. Their ears were trained to catch the slightest sound. He was not a physical coward, but for purely physical reasons he would have disliked to have them catch him there. But the physical phase of the matter was not the one which gave him either the most pain or the most anxiety. What would Hugh think of the finding of one of his blood-one to whom he had just confessed relationship—eavesdropping? But there was no escape. The door of the room in which the Vigilantes were being open, he could not make a break and go down the hallway. His shoulders were against the sill of a window, but as a movement to keep his feet awake would attract attention, it would not do to open and jump from a window. All that he could do was to grind his material and moral teeth, and wait for the meeting to adjourn.

What he heard and saw revealed much of human nature. In those days it was said that in making his way westward a man left God at the Mississippi. There was then, beyond that river, no hypocrisy—unless it was of the reverse sort—

if there is ever the need anywhere, to say nothing of the possibility, of a human being's pretending to be worse than he is. The ones upon whom Emory looked from his enforced hiding were not even persons—in the proper sense of that word. Their masques were off. They were appearing in their naked individualities. Not one of them was making the slightest attempt to conceal from himself, or anybody else, what he was. Each of them saw the others hideous. But he would never think of saying anything about it outside. When there is no disguise between individuals, each of them is safe from the revelations of the other—unless the other be the devil himself. If there be any class of men worse than thieves, there is also "honor" among its members—especially, to say nothing of the fear that revelations may be met by revelations, in a condition of society where tattling would mean that the tattler would never tattle again.

Emory's position was so cramped, painful and dangerous that he would have found it not easy to give his whole attention to acquiring the verb of an unknown language, apprehending a philosophical proposition, or solving a mathematical problem, but he could not help learning from what the Vigilantes said that Centreville had been worsted in the contest for the capital of the

county by the lavish use of money, of which Breezemead had the more; that Breezemead had thought that she would prevent its reopening by heavily mortgaging the county for the building of the court house; and that it would have remained quiescent had it not been for the appearance of a new factor in the case—a personal factor—of the plain name of Walker, a journalist, who had lately bought The Butternut City Whopper-a paper which had very much run down-which he scon ran up to a commanding influence in the southern part of the county. A line run east and west through the middle of the county would pass through both Breezemead and Centreville. North of that line the majority were Breezemeadians, in relation to the location of the county seat, because of the size and wealth of Breezemead, in which regard, they held, no other town in the county could ever hope to overtake her; while south, they were Centrevillians, pretendedly, or really, on geographical grounds. Butternut City was in the extreme southwest corner of the county. She was some miles nearer to Breezemead than to Centreville. But she had no reason to be jealous of Centreville. Mr. Walker was a man of promptness, courage, brains, and of not too much principle to make a good journalist. Before taking hold of The Whopper he had mastered the

facts of the situation. His attacks on Breeze-mead, Breezemead methods and Breezemeadians were more than pointed. He never struck, he always thrust, and never failed to drive his dagger home, and to the hilt. There was no leading man in Breezemead whose quick he had not touched, whose blood he had not drawn.

When his name was mentioned in the meeting of which Emory was so accidentally and so painfully a witness and auditor, the curses were deep, bitter and malicious—though uttered in tones and accompanied by expressions of admiration. No good person would read further in this history did I give even a hint of them. Fortunately this is not necessary to the conveyance of what Emory learned of what this man Walker had accomplished in the interest of Centreville, and so to the detriment of Breezemead. He could not have had much money, personally, or at his command, but he had induced the State Senator and the Representatives from Crowley County, and through them the Legislature in both branches, to see it to be to their own interests, and to pretend to see it to be to the interest of the county, that there should be a resubmission of the question of the location of its seat of government. He had made the southern portion of the county solid for Centreville-so solid that the Vigilantes saw that it

would take three times as much money as it had taken before to break that solidity. He had managed to reduce the Breezemeadian majority in the northern portion of the county—to so reduce it that they were anxious.

"We must get rid of that man!" said Mr. Byn-son.

"How?" was the question from several mouths, and on all faces.

Mr. Gurnsey smiled till his dead-white, cemetery-suggesting, false teeth stood out in almost independence of his lips, and said:

"We can't wait till the revival of religion season is here, can we?"

"What's religion got to do with it?" asked Mr. Erskine.

"You know I'm a Methodist," replied Mr. Gurnsey, "and it has struck me that we might get Walker to a revival and have him overcome by the powers!"

Everybody laughed at this, save Erskine. He said, with striking verbal accompaniment:

"Let up on that! I'm no saint"—a statement which no one seemed disposed to dispute—"but—I'd say it more freely if Tombstones weren't of that faith—my mother's a Methodist, and—well, religion must be counted out o' this deal!"

"I only made a suggestion," said Mr. Gurnsey.

"It mightn't work. The revival season's too far off anyway. But Mr. Erskine has jumped to a conclusion. There are powers in bottles as well as those which hover about the mourner's bench!"

"Oh!" rumbled in Dick's mighty chest.

"Who can mention a better plan?" Mr. Gurnsey wanted to know.

Doctor Gray thought that someone might lose a horse and have Walker accused of stealing it.

"That would involve his hanging!" said Hugh.
The Doctor showed his merlons, in snickering
cruelly away back in his post-nasal cavity.

"I've met the fellow," Hugh continued. "He's a gentleman. I like him. Then I don't w-a-nt blood on my conscience—uselessly!"

"Make a suggestion, then, Mud!" said Dick with a sneer, which seemed to be more than half put on, adding: "I'd be in for gettin' him into a shindy and doin' him up!"

"Wh-y mightn't w-e kidn-a-p him?" drawled

Hugh.

"To that end a bottle of powers from Tombstones' bar might come in handy!" laughed Erskine.

"Wisdom may ascend from the grave!" was Hugh's comment upon this.

Paying no attention to the persiflage, Mr. Byn-i

son said—the somebody within pulling vigorously at the string:

"A good suggestion, Mr. Charles! Who'll undertake the job?"

"I know some fellows who'd do it well!" said Dick.

"Will you become responsible to us for its accomplishment?" asked Mr. Bynson.

"If Mud'll join me!"

Hugh nodded consent, then, consulting his watch, said:

"Time's up! I m-u-st be go-ing!"

After some talk about what was necessary to the efficiency of a guard at the courthouse, the number of men who were ready at signal to protect the archives, and what movement the Centrevillians were apt to make next, the meeting adjourned.

When all was quiet, Emory crawled from his hiding, stumped to his room as if his legs were wooden, blew out his light, undressed in the dark, tumbled into bed, fell asleep rubbing his tingling knees, and did not awaken till ten o'clock the next morning.

CHAPTER XII.

A CONCERT.

His late breakfast over, question rose in Emory's mind as to the church in which he was to serve. Mr. Bynson had spoken of it, but said that the calls that they were about to make would not take them in its direction.

Emory's desire to see it was as natural as would be a merchant's to see the storeroom in which he was to do business, the teacher's to see the schoolhouse in which he was to instruct, the blacksmith's to see the shop in which he was to pound iron and shoe horses.

When he had lighted his cigar, he went to the office desk and asked:

"Will you be kind enough to direct me to St. John's Church?"

"The Episcopal Church?" asked Mr. Gurnsey, who at that hour was his own clerk—with an air that he would rather answer another question—

one for instance as to the whereabouts of the Methodist Church—but with perfect politeness.

"Yes."

In making change for a departing guest, Mr. Gurnsey replied, somewhat absently:

"On the corner this way of the Court-House Square."

Emory moved away, thinking:

"I have been at the Court House, and I reached it by passing into the plaza at the corner this way, but I do not remember seeing a church there. But it may be that the churches are as different here from what they are elsewhere as are the Christians!"

In his effort to recollect anything like a church at the point indicated, he paused on the veranda. Seeing him there, and thinking that he had possibly not been effusive enough for a landlord, in giving directions, Mr. Gurnsey, there being a moment's leisure to him, came out, and, with much bowing, gesticulation and showing of tombstones, gave minute information as to how the church in mind was to be reached, by going so many blocks south, to a store with a striped awning, turning east at that point, going so many blocks east, and—

"Excuse me!"

This exclamation was from Emory. He had

knocked the ashes from his cigar, and they had blown in Mr. Gurnsey's face, causing him to change his pen from one hand to the other, and knuckle his right eye energetically.

Mr. Gurnsey did not swear. He was too good a Christian for that. He asked—which may have been his way of swearing:

"Do you think it right to smoke?"

"If it doesn't hurt you!"

"Do you think it right for a minister of the gospel to smoke?"

"Why should it be wrong for him if it is not wrong for anybody else?"

"I think it wouldn't be right for me to smoke!"
"Why not?"

"I'm a church member, and it seems to me that I ought to be careful as to the example I set—especially to the young—and particularly in this country, where everybody is so godless!"

"Even to the point of confounding the powers of the mourner's bench with those which a bottle may contain!"

Mr. Gurnsey looked quickly at Emory, gave again the directions, with less elaboration, turned abruptly, and went back into the office.

Emory's way led him by the Crowley County Bank. He stepped in. He was shown to the president's room. There sat Mr Bynson. There was a worn, weary look in his face. This was only caught, though, at the sudden opening of the door, of which, as the approach to it was heavily carpeted, and as it opened noiselessly, he had had no warning. When he looked up and saw Emory, the somebody pulled the string at once, and the indescribable smile appeared. Emory smiled, not in return to this smile, but at a thought which popped into his head—that could a spider, lying in wait in its den, smile, it would smile just that sort of a smile.

Mr. Bynson arose, gave Emory his hand, and said:

"I hope you slept well last night!"

"Very—after I got to sleep. I did not waken till rather late this morning. I was fatigued from my trip. Stage-riding is not a daily experience with me. Being out in the wind all day had a soporific effect. Then I was somewhat excited at Whackston the night before and did not get much rest."

At this Mr. Bynson smiled appreciatively—almost independently of the string-puller—and said:

"You are stopping at the Adnogal House, I remember. You went to bed early, I presume, being so fatigued!"

"Not very. I had a caller till nearly eleven o'clock. He gone, to my surprise, there were not

the noises which an Eastern man would expect to hear in a Western town towards midnight, especially about an hotel. There must have been, however, a meeting of some sort—of a club, a caucus, or a committee—of a dozen men or so—in a room down the hallway in which mine is situated."

The somebody within forgot all about the string. Mr. Bynson's face was set, questioningly. Emory added, with a careless smile and action:

"But to what is not my business I never pay attention!"

"That is the safer way!" said Mr. Bynson.

Then Emory:

"I'm on my way to see the church."

"You'll want to go inside, I presume," said Mr. Bynson, the somebody within again vigorously at work with the string. "I have a key somewhere. The Bishop informed me, when I was elected senior warden, that it was my duty to have a key to the church. I got one. Where is it?"—opening a drawer. "Ah, here!"

Emory took the key, and was gone.

The church was a little, oblong structure, "Not much larger," said Emory to himself, in standing before it, "than the outbuilding at home in which Uncle Dave so neatly stores the supply of wood and bituminous coal for the winter!"

It must have made some impression on him, the

day before; for it did not seem entirely strange. Excepting a rude trefoil in the gable towards the street, he saw no hint on it, or about it, that it was a church, and that he would not have noticed had he not been looking for some ecclesiastical sign. The window frames were mullioned on the eightby-ten inch plan, and filled with unstained glass, of a poor quality, wrinkled and smoke-stained. There was nothing hopeful in the appearance of the building. Emory felt as he imagined he would have felt had he been a military officer who was told to take possession of a fort on the border of the enemy's country, to hold it, to make sallies from it, and found it to be nothing more than a paling fence. But when he had unlocked the door he felt better. There was evidently some churchmanship among the people. Though wooden, the altar was, in comparison with the church, a fine one. The color of its hangings was that of the season. It stood in a sanctuary, railed from the chancel. There was no pulpit—which Emory was pleased to notice; for a pulpit in so small a church would have impressed one very much as would a plug-hat on a six-year-old boy. But there was a brass eagle lectern-memorial. This was gratifying. Somebody had associated the church with his-or, more probably, her-dead. Others would put in memorials. The church would come

would look upon it as their spiritual home, as the place of their communion with those of the Unseen. There were hints about of the activity of this feeling already. The church was neatly carpeted. The walls were not frescoed, but they were washed in a delicate coffee-and-cream. This modest little interior in a frontier town, awakened the reverential and tender in him more fully than had many a vast and pretentious interior. With bowed head, he passed through the chancel entered the sanctuary, and knelt at the altar.

When he had come out of the church and stood with his back to the street, locking the door—wondering how he might manage that it might never be locked—someone said to him in a drawl which could not be mistaken:

"Thought you be-longed there o-n Sunday!" Emory glanced over his shoulder, saw Hugh Charles and Dick Erskine, and replied:

"Like to know something about my parapets before I let off my guns!"

With the manner, and in the accents of a gentleman, Mr. Erskine said:

'Want to know whether they will withstand the recoil!"

With his slow smile, long-drawn grin, and

drawl, Hugh made Dick and Emory acquainted. This formality through, Emory said:

"Seems to me, Hugh, that you're getting around rather late for an assistant."

Hugh replied: "A fellow doesn't feel like turning out very early when he's not gotten to bed before half past two in the morning."

"You had plenty of time for a nap between leaving me last night and midnight," said Emory.

This caused Dick to glance at Hugh, who drawled:

"I told him that I had to go on watch at midnight."

Dick looked a little glum at this, but made no comment.

Emory said: "I wonder that anybody gets up at all in this country; there is a quality in the air which acts like opium."

"That's a sign that you're a tenderfoot!" laughed Hugh.

"Yes," said Dick, "the air here affects all new-comers in that way. For the first six weeks I couldn't get enough sleep. I would almost fall off over my han—from my feet, I mean."

At this break Hugh laughed a high internal laugh. Emory could not repress a smile, and Dick guffawed, saying:

"But a man who could treat such a rough as

Blink-Eyed Tom as you did must know something of the world."

To this Emory made no reply, but returning to the subject of sleeping, said:

"I was rather unfortunate last night in getting no sleep before midnight."

"What was the matter?" asked Hugh, with a suspicious glance.

"Everybody on my floor seemed to be talking in his sleep! There were at least a dozen talking. And the singular thing was that they seemed to be in some sort of a debate. Had the voices not been tenor, baritone and bass I would have thought there was a Woman's Rights Convention in progress. As it was, the only thing that prevented me from thinking it a Methodist Conference was the character of the language used."

Dick and Hugh exchanged glances. Emory excused himself, and started as if he would go to the Adnogal House. Before he reached there he turned off. He was trained to remark everything. When he had called with Mr. Bynson on Doctor Gray, he had noted his office hours. Looking at his watch, he saw that he was within them. He went directly to the Doctor's office. The Doctor was glad to see him. He said:

"Doctor, I have come for advice. I am not sleeping the early part of the night. Till about

midnight, though awake, I hear voices which are not angelic voices. One will speak of having somebody get religion without a deep desire that he should have its consolations. Another will speak of saddling on him the theft of a horse, which has not been stolen, but which has been taken away with a purpose. Another will suggest fastening a quarrel upon him and 'doing him up.' To these schemes one will have grace enough to object. Then it will be decided to kidnap him. My nerves are in such a condition that I may do something. Can't you help me?"

The Doctor turned a shade redder, if that was possible, showed all his merlons, and said, with that post-nasal snicker of his:

"I would suggest a change of climate."

"That would be hardly possible. I have not been here long enough to know that the climate does not agree with me. Then I am here to take charge of St. John's Church. I have just been in that church, and in praying at its altar have come to definite conclusions in relation to a matter which has been on my mind heavily ever since I awoke this morning. If you think I need no medicine, I'll take no more of your time!"

The Doctor's face was a shade less red, and there was a serious look in his face as his caller took his departure. From there Emory went to Mr. Nothym's hardware store, found that gentleman in, and surprised him by saying:

"I would like to look at your revolvers."

"You're in the wrong store!" said Mr. Nothym.

In saying this his eyes twinkled, and his onesided goatee seemed more one-sided than ever, as he smiled idiosyncratically—his lips receding, his chin protruding and rising.

"No," said Emory, in the same spirit, which drew him and Mr. Nothym more closely together. "I have an indistinct impression that I know what I want!"

Mr. Nothym went to a case and handed out a revolver.

"Haven't you a better one than that?" asked Emory.

This awakened the commercial spirit in Mr. Nothym, and he produced something really fine, saying:

"What do you know about a gun, anyway?"

"I know, at least, which end of a revolver to take hold of!" was the answer, which caused Mr. Nothym to throw back his head with laughter, for he had hold of the barrel, to, it was discovered, the dinging somewhat of its polish.

Emory took the revolver off the glass case, where

Mr. Nothym laid it, moved it about in his hand, and said:

"It's a good one, but I don't like its balance exactly!"

"Can you shoot?"

"A little. Have you anywhere to try?"

Mr. Nothym led the way into the back yard. There, at one side, he had fitted up a shooting gallery. He was one of the best shots of the county. He would have been a dangerous man had his nerves been naturally strong under excitement.

This gallery was furnished with the best of arms. From a number of revolvers Emory selected one which suited him, charged it, and, as rapidly as it could be discharged, put six balls in a bull's eye, fifty feet away. Then Mr. Nothym darkened the gallery and placed a lighted candle at its extreme end. Emory snuffed it.

"Come outside!" said Mr. Nothym.

In the bright sunlight he threw a silver quarter in the air. Emory doubled it as it fell. A cat was walking gingerly along the top of the fence at the rear of the yard.

"Can you kill that cat?" asked Mr. Nothym.

"Yes; but I won't."

"Why?"

"Because I think it has as good a right to live

as I have! But I'll make it shake its head and jump off the fence, if you say so."

"All right!"

Mr. Nothym bent over, put his hands on his knees, shut his lips so tightly that his goatee stood obliquely out, and said:

"Now!"

Emory did as he had promised.

They stepped back into the gallery. Mr. Nothym asked:

"Do you really want a revolver?"

"Why, of course I do, or I wouldn't have asked for one!"

"Take the one with which you've done the neatest bit of all-round shooting I've seen for many a day!"

Emory looked at the revolver, fondling it, and said:

"Can't!"

"Why?"

"It's worth too much!"

"Won't cost you a cent!"

"But___"

"No buts!"

So the Reverend Mr. Emberson came into possession of the revolver which he has, and shows with great pride, to this day.

"But for what in the world do you want a revolver?" asked Mr. Nothym.

"Well," answered Emory, with a laugh, "this is a country in which shooting seems to be common. It may be necessary for me to take a hand sooner or later. I want to be ready should that time ever come. It may come sooner than is expected. I was greatly troubled by a committee-meeting last night. I may want to try to prevent a great wrong being done to someone. The Committee may think that I have no right to interfere. I may have to defend, or attempt to enforce that right."

Mr. Nothym's lips first opened in astonishment, then pursed questioningly, then closed tightly—going in till his goatee stood obliquely, not out, but up. He said:

"It seems to me that the preacher should attend to the gospel!"

"That is what I propose to do, the best I can!" said Emory, smilingly, "to enforce its principles, if necessary!" and went away, carrying the splendid gift which he had received in his pocket.

Though autumn was come and the nights were cool, the days at this latitude were warm—pleasantly so. The air was fresh, moving too constantly to become impure. Whatever may be said of the summers of the Southwest, or of the springs or the winters, the autumns are divinely

delightful—the chief climatic attractiveness of the region being that they encroach deeply into the winter, the days being frequently so fine till late in January that one wonders whether he deserves them, feeling quite certain that the rest of humanity does not. This was the first day upon which Emory had been localized on the Southwest, and he was enjoying the after part of it to the full, sitting on the veranda of the Adnogal House, smoking, when Hugh came, a serious look on his face. Said Emory, laughing:

"What's the matter, old man? You look as if you might have buried the last of your relatives?"

The slow smile started on Hugh's lips, but it died "in the borning." He said:

"What trou-bl-es me is that I may have to bury the only relative I have in the Southwest!"

This was truly American, thoroughly Western, humorous in spite of its ghastliness. There was pathos in the tone in which Hugh added:

"Say, Em, you weren't guilty of eavesdropping, were you?"

Emory's lips shut so hard that it was with difficulty that he opened them to say:

"Hugh, I would resent that question from even you did I not feel that you have the right to ask it!"

Then he related what had transpired after Hugh left him, the night before, adding:

"That Vigilance Committee of yours is composed of a lot of cowards!"

"You're wr-ong there!" drawled Hugh, judicially. "The-re isn't one o-f th-em who isn't a man of approved courage, sa-ving possibly Mr. Nothym, and he'd stand to be killed, even though he might be too nervous to de-f-end himself. He is the only coward I have ever known to have the respect of brave men! This comes of the fact, no doubt, that his nerves are constitutionally weak."

"Would any man not a coward make such a proposition as was made by Doctor Gray or Erskine with regard to that man Walker? The one made by the landlord was worse; for the doper would be a killer were he not afraid. But Gurnsey doesn't seem—in spite of the tombstones with which his mouth is filled—to be as bloodthirsty as either the Doctor or Erskine. They are common murderers in their hearts, whatever they may be in their histories."

"I know both of them thoroughly," said Hugh.
"I have seen them tried more than once. They are brave, true to their friends, and generous, but red Indians in their cruelty and treachery to their enemies. And you must take into the account that they have such men as themselves to deal withmen who are products of border conditions—the

opposite of the conditions out of which a saint—such an one, for instance, as I am—comes."

That there was hope for Emory in the light thrown on things by his relation of the circumstances which led to his hearing the councils of the Vigilantes, in Hugh's thought, was evident frem the spontaneity of the smile—if anything so slow may be spoken of as spontaneous—with which he referred to himself as a saint. As he rose to go, he asked:

"What are you going to do to-night?"

"Going to the concert."

"That's so! I'd forgotten all about that! I'll come round and go with you!"

This concert was one that was to be given for the benefit of St. John's Church, at the court house—in the room where the court sat in term, where, between terms, political and other meetings were held, "barn-stormers" appeared, the phrenological lecturer touched the bumps which he hoped might prove buttons electrically attached to the opening of purses, during the week, and where, on Sundays, morning, afternoon and evening, took place the services of various denominations of Christians. A number of persons—among them Mr. Bynson—had spoken to Emory of the proposed entertainment, asked him to be present—saying that it occurred fortunately, as it would

give him a good opportunity to meet his parishioners and others. It was expected that he would "make a few remarks." This he did at the opening, to the extent of saying that the audience was assembled to hear—not a speech, but music. "After which remark," he said, "it would not do for me to go on. lest you think that I think that I can make a musical speech!"—at which not remarkably brilliant mot there was a general smile, and a ripple of applause.

There is no need that I describe the concert.

Emory did not pay much attention to its numbers till—there was no printed programme—a solo by a Miss Avaway was announced. He did not pay much attention then till Miss Avaway stepped on the platform. Then he was all attention! This Hugh noticed, leaned over, and whispered in his ear:

"Chicken!"

This Emory did not notice. He was absorbed by, not the song, but the singer. But the song and the singer were one to him. Miss Avaway was modesty itself. Pretty? She had an abundance of light-brown hair, parted a little to one side and brushed plainly over her temples. He discovered afterwards that her gray eyes had a hint of a cross, and that her diminutive nose was

not exactly straight on her face. What did she sing? He did not know. How did she sing? He had no idea. Her voice was remarkably sweet, and it was herself. Was she recalled? His hands were sore for a week afterwards.

After the concert he was introduced to her. Her hand did not melt in his; he melted all around her hand. Had he not torn himself away from that court house he would have made a fool of himself!

Had he slept that night he would have dreamed of Miss Avaway, of course. But he did not sleep. Why?

CHAPTER XIII.

A CONCLUSION REACHED.

The concert had at least the virtue of not being too long. It was over by eleven o'clock. Half an hour later Hugh and Emory were in the latter's room. He produced the cigars. Hugh took one, lighted it, and crossed his legs comfortably, as if he were settling for a good smoke and chat. But Emory had no more than lighted his, thrown himself on his bed, on the broad of his back, the doubled bolster and both pillows under his head—which was his favorite position when smoking, chatting, "lazing it," as he was fond of expressing it—when Hugh moved, with a motion hurried for him, and said—reaching for his hat as if something had slipped his mind till that moment:

"By the way, Em, I can't stop! I have an engagement!"

"Is it a meeting of the Committee, or of a committee of the Committee?" asked Emory.

Hugh did not smile, grin, or drawl in reply. There was a serious look in his face.

"I understand," said Emory. "The Committee, or its committee, is to sit on my case!"

Still Hugh made no reply. He simply went away.

He gone, Emory thought over the situation.

"Haven't been in this blessed town thirty-six hours! And I've gotten myself in a pretty pickle! That confounded Committee—or a committee representing it—is about to go into session, and the interesting theme of its deliberations will be what disposition to make of me. I don't know this to be true, but I'd wager my neck that it is! That is, if my neck's worth anything. And it wouldn't be worth much were I not willing to risk it in the interest of the right. But is it worth much in the line of my first thought concerning it? These Vigilantes may warn me to leave the county and give me very little time in which to do it. In that case I might make for Butternut City, and warn Editor Walker of the danger threatening him. Might I? It would be seen to that I did not do that. If it is decided that I shall go, I'll probably be sent away under a guard, or when the decision is sent to me tried men will be posted to watch all the ways by which Butternut City may be reached. Suppose I refuse to go-then what?

A rope, and one of those ugly butternut trees in the river bottom! Would they treat a clergyman so? They care as little for a clergyman as they do for any other man. And I do not care to be considered a clergyman by anybody, if that involves my being considered less than a man! Still I am not disgusted with life; and I couldn't help entering upon the attempt to save this man Walker; and I can't allow these men to drive me away from where I have as good a right to be as they, and what's a clergyman for anyway but to bear the burdens of others-to die for them if necessary-to stand for the right the more firmly the more there are standing for the wrong? And will not God take care of me? No doubt. But only on the condition that I do what I can to take care of myself. And what can I do? The Vigilance Committee is a representative body. In whatever it resolves to do it will be backed by the whole community. I am alone. But, trusting in God, I shall do my best in selfdefense, should there be need. And there is a tremendous power in one determined man-especially when he is armed and knows how to handle his weapon, and feels that he is right, and has a clear, quick eye and a steady nerve. It helps him for those who stand against him, or who come upon him, to know that his weapon is good, and that it is pretty nearly as much a part of him as is the

hand with which he holds it. Mr. Nothym can give his fellows some information which I am not indisposed to have them possess."

At this-having turned down his lamp, the partitions being so flimsy that he did not know where a crack or a hole might present itself to a prying eye—he fell upon his knees for a moment, rose and threw himself on the bed, revolver at hand. Then came the ordeal of waiting—that trying ordeal—especially to one of Emory's temperament. He enjoyed action—even dangerous action. He could face almost any certainty, with a fraction of a chance on his side. Uncertainty, with even a whole chance in his favor, was much more terrible. More than once before certainty came that night he grasped his revolver, and half rose to go down the hallway to where he felt convinced his destiny, if not his life, was in the balance—to the room where he had seen the Vigilantes in session the night before-and know the worst. But he always thought better of it, and lay down. At such moments an angel which seemed to hover about him would come very near. He would feel a touch, which would cause a sweet glow of patience to pass through his whole being. I have been non-committal as to the sex of this angel; but it must have been a female; for it had the face, the speaking eyes, and the glossy hair of Miss Avaway.

When she had quieted him a number of times he forgot all about his dangers, his uncertainties. His mind was engaged with her—which, of course, settles the identity of the angel. He tried to remember the color of her eyes. He could not. To recall her voice. He could not. Her figure, her face. He could not. He could hardly remember whether she was tall or short. He had an impression that she was neither a blonde or a brunette. He could not recall any one particular of her appearance distinctly, save her shining light-brown hair. It was evidently not the physical Miss Avaway who had impressed him. There awakened in his mind the question:

"Did I impress her as she did me?"

The philosophical answer came:

"There is the law of correlation. There cannot be a this without a that. One having a spontaneous friendship for another is indicative that that other has a spontaneous friendship for him. And friendship is a sort of love. And what is true of a sort of anything—must not that be more plainly true of the thing itself in its purity? My soul's rushing out to Miss Avaway is pretty good evidence that, at least, the face of her soul did not turn away from it!"

I make haste to say that this conclusion was no more than reached when he struck himself vio-

lently on the side of his head with a clenched hand, and a "Psha!" and I say it with pleasure, for in the action and the exclamation there was, revelation that he was not a prig. Then he thought:

"Out with philosophy! The probabilities are that she was simply in a state of exaltation from the song she had sung! What a fool I am to think for a moment that any condition of my soul could have any influence on her!"

This revulsion of feeling caused him to realize again the uncertainty of his situation in the regard of the Vigilantes. Again he was impatient. Again he half rose and grasped his revolver. But again he felt the touch of the angel. Then Miss Avaway filled his mind completely. His imagination began to work actively. He saw castle after castle in the air—each of them more sumptuous than the one preceding. And each of them had a mistress with soft, light-brown, glossy hair—brushed smoothly over her temples.

The reader may say:

"There! Such dreams to an ordinary mortal in such circumstances as those in which you have placed your hero would be impossible!"

I would answer:

"You speak as if this were not an authentic history. The idea of my having placed my hero

in these or in any other set of circumstances! That you may receive the full benefit of what I am writing, you must remember that he was placed in these circumstances by previous circumstances those, for instance, which preceded and accompanied his birth. He was not an ordinary mortal. The ministry was not simply a profession, orwhich would have been infinitely worse—a business to him; he held sensitively that a minister should be a man-a man among men; he was naturally chivalrous-belonging to the day of knighthood rather than to this commercial ageone "born out of due season"; he had a conscience; in the cause of righteousness he would rather suffer himself than see anyone else suffer-from a bird to a Bishop, from an eel to an editor-suffer wrongly. I admit that he does not belong to this age. I am giving a fraction of his history for the benefit of the age in which he lives by accident -if there be such a thing as an accident-as, by accident, that imperial songster, the mocking-bird, now and then gets too far north for a summer, to be nipped, and have its song frozen by the early frosts.

But even an authentic history cannot give full information on every detail. How long the castlebuilding lasted I do not know. At length it was interrupted by the treading of the feet of two men

in the hallway—which, in the stillness of the night, made the poorly-constructed hotel creak in all its boards, timbers and joints—and a startling knock at the door of his room.

He said: "All right! Just a moment!"—rose deliberately, and, standing close to the bed, the head of which was against the wall through which the door opened, a corner say a foot and a half from its cheek, asked:

"Who's there?"

"I!" responded a deep voice, which Emory recognized.

"Who are you?"

"Open at once!"

"By what right do you make the demand?"

"Open the door, or we'll show you!"

"Make the slightest attempt in that direction and you are dead men as surely as there is a God on the other side of the Mississippi!"

This Emory said with the side of his leg against the bed, leaning over, so that his head and body would not be in line, knowing that the reply might come in the shape of a ball from a revolver, to which the thin door would offer but a slight resistance.

But the ball did not come. There was a whispered consultation between the men in the hall-

way—after which was said, in the same voice which had spoken:

"Open up! We don't want to hurt you!"

"And I don't propose that you shall!" said Emory, suddenly jerking the door open. This action took the men in the hallway, in which there was a dim light, entirely by surprise.

"Stand as you are!" commanded Emory. "I'll shoot the one of you who moves before I tell him to."

No man knows so quickly as the Western man when the other has "the drop on him."

Emory was not surprised to see that one of them was Dick Erskine. The other was Doctor Gray. They obeyed promptly the commands which came sharply and in quick succession.

"Hands up! About face! March!"

The rest of the committee—not the Committee—laughed when they were marched into the room in which their marcher had seen and heard the Committee the night before.

"You wish you'd let me go now, do-n't you leaving my revolver behind?" drawled Hugh, with his slow smile and long-drawn grin.

Mr. Nothym's goatee stood obliquely in the air, as he said grimly—his sense of the ludicrousness of the situation having passed:

"Didn't I tell you that I'd seen him handle a revolver, and that he beats the world!"

The somebody within pulled the string, and to Mr. Bynson's lips came the financier's smile, as he said:

"He knows not only how to handle a revolver, he also knows his own mind, and how to handle himself——"

"To say nothing of Tub and Fire!" put in Hugh, more promptly than he had ever been known to speak before.

Paying no attention to the interruption, Mr. Bynson went on:

"He's a good man to have on our side!"

"Amen!" chimed in Mr. Gurnsey, with an unction which could not have been surpassed had he been in a revival-meeting. Not his religion, but his hypocrisy, had become a second nature to him, and always came to the fore when he was excited.

Said Mr. Bynson:

"I propose---"

"I beg your pardon," said Emory, "but I'm in the position to make propositions now! What I propose is, that you all stand up!"

They all stood up.

"That the rest of you put your hands above your heads, as the Doctor and Mr. Erskine have already done!"

The rest of them put their hands above their heads.

"That you all face me!"
They all faced him.
"That you line up!"
They lined up.
"That you right dress!"
They right dressed.
"That you right about face!"
They right about faced.
"That you forward march!"
They forward marched.
"That you halt!"
They halted.

They were directly in front of a table which stood a little out from the wall at the bottom of the room.

"Now," said Emory, "I want you to place your revolvers on that table! You know that I'm by profession not a man of blood. But my situation is rather a desperate one. I'm alone. There are six of you. In self-defense, I'll have to kill the man who does not obey me! When I say 'The right hand,' bring that hand down, draw a revolver and place it on the table—keeping the left hand in the air. This done return the right hand into the air. When I say 'left hand' bring your left hand down, draw your other revolver, and

place it on the table—keeping the right hand in the air. Now:

"Right hand!"

Six right hands descended, six revolvers were drawn and deposited on the table, and six hands returned into the air.

"Left hand!"

Six left hands descended, six more revolvers were drawn and deposited on the table, and six hands returned into the air.

The men stood as they had stood before they began disarming themselves.

"Right about face!"

They were again facing up the room.

"Forward march!"

As they approached him, Emory stepped towards them, moving obliquely, all the while covering them with his revolver. While their backs were towards him he had not had his eyes off them for a moment. But reaching back, he had closed the door, turned the key which stuck in it, and pulled it out and put it in his pocket. When they were within a pace of the door, he commanded:

"Halt!"

They halted.

"Right about face!"

Again they right abouted.

When he had regarded them for a bit, with a

smile out of which a good deal of the wickedness was gone, he said:

"Now, gentlemen, you are disarmed. You are at the mercy of a parson, who believes in preaching the gospel not only, but also in enforcing its principles when necessary—the ability according with the necessity. I can only surmise what you would have done had you gotten me in your power, and, though I am about as curious as the average person, that does not matter now. I not only preach, and enforce, when I can, the principles of the gospel, I believe in them, and, occasionally, make some sort of an effort to live them. Take down your hands! Break ranks! But stay in that part of the room! I'll keep between you and the table for the present."

There was no response. The silence was embarrassing. Emory broke it by saying:

"Mr. Bynson, you had a proposition to make, had you not?"

His string-produced smile very pronounced, Mr. Bynson replied:

"For the moment I had forgotten that this is not a meeting of the Vigilance Committee, but of a committee appointed by it, and was going to propose your name for membership."

"Go ahead!" said Erskine. "As we practically appointed ourselves, and as we will receive it, I

guess our report of whatever we do will be accepted!"

Thinking that he might have more influence within than without the body of the Vigilantes, Emory said:

"I would be perfectly willing to receive the honor."

Made by Mr. Bynson, seconded by Doctor Gray, put by Erskine, there was unanimous accord to the nomination.

"Now," said Emory, "I take it that you are honorable men, and mean what you've done. I accept the result. But before I relinquish my advantage over you I must attend to the business that came to my mind before I was out of bed this morning. What do you propose to do in the case of the Butternut City editor?"

"We did propose to kidnap him," boomed Erskine. "But now we must ask you what you will allow us to do with him!"

"What do you mean by kidnapping him?" asked Emory.

"Only taking him off till the county seat question is settled!"

"Doing him any harm?"

"No."

"Making him comfortable?"

"Yes!" answered Dick, seeing Emory's drift-

"furnishing him with the best accommodations that can be commanded—the best eatables—the best smokables—the best drinkables!"

"He probably wouldn't treat you better?"

"Couldn't!"

"He'd kidnap you if he had a chance?"

"Bet your boots! And consider it the best joke of the season!"

"On the conditions mentioned," said Emory, "I, myself, vote for the kidnapping of Editor Walker! Resume your arms, gentlemen!"

The meeting broke up in great good humor.

Hugh went to his room with Emory, and actually cried with admiration for his kinsman

"But how did it come that not one of the four of you in the committee room came to the aid of your fellows in trouble?" asked Emory.

"They were two against one! Then Nothym couldn't, and neither of the three others of us was disposed."

"I thank you, Hugh."

"You needn't. 'Blood's thicker than water.' I knew the blood that I would be going up against, and felt that the real interest of Breezemead would be served better by the defeat of the purpose of the committee—which had refused to listen to me—than by its success!"

"But the three others?—the reason for Mr. Nothym's inactivity in the case being known."

"The nerves of both Mr. Bynson and Mr. Gurnsey are good enough, but the caution of each of them is better! You had an eye out for us?"

"I was faced in that direction!"

CHAPTER XIV.

HIGHWAY ROBBERY.

Hugh gone, Emory stepped to the window and looked out. There was the first hint of day. Things were seen vaguely. They were dripping. He knew that as the night had come on there had been no indication of rain. Then he remembered that he was within the Great American Desert-a region which less than twenty years before had been thought uninhabitable, save for prairie-dogs, owls, rattlesnakes, coyotes, buffaloes, Indians and the tougher species of cowboys-into which a few hardy adventurers—the scouts of civilization had pushed, and shown that the soil was marvelously productive, when there was sufficient rainfall, which, it was established in time, there was apt to be during enough seasons to keep a large population alive, though through the other seasons what was not parched by the fierce sun was withered by the hot winds. Remembering that he was in a

region which partook of the character of the desert, he knew that the dampness with which everything—the buildings, the occasional fence, the hitching posts, and the few young trees which had been set out by the better-to-do, to be watered and propped and repropped daily against the winds which were constantly blowing—was dripping was the result of, not rain, but dew, which the earth yields nightly and the atmosphere absorbs daily—I would better say morningly, were I allowed to coin a word, for the sun is not far above the horizon before the dew-dampness is gone, and everywhere is the dead-dry from which he went down.

As the light increased the scene became ghostly. I know of nothing more suggestive of the unearthly than a sunrise on the prairies. He comes over the edge of a level. There are no trees or heights to cast shadows, no valleys in which they may lurk. There is no real or apparent conflict between Light and Darkness. And death without a struggle is always disheartening—even the death of Darkness. But there is a more general truth involved here. To an imaginative and impressionable person, a sunset is full of poetry, hope, the sense of victory, while a sunrise is full of prose, despair, the sense of defeat. And there was never a more imaginative and impressionable human being than was this same Emory M. Emberson.

That which he had seen vaguely in waiting for, that of which he had not thought in the excitement of the renconter with the leaders of the Vigilance Committee, came upon him now overwhelmingly-its exceeding danger. He had had one chance in a million of succeeding. He had taken that chance. He had won. He had won simply through daring and address. He could imagine how his mother's form would straighten, and how her eyes would sink back and glow in the cavities under her brows, with pride in the one who was not only her son, but her representative in the battle of life, did she know how he had demeaned himself in the ordeal through which he had just passed. Ordeal? It would have been an ordeal for one differently constituted. But he had, been awfully tried—in waiting for the ordeal to begin. Through that Miss Avaway, or his thought of her-whichever it was-had helped him.

There came to him the question:

"Could anyone be of so much help to another as she was to me without being present?"

He could only answer the question speculatively, and I must allow what response I may be able to make to come naturally in its place in the continued unfolding of this history.

When Erskine's knock had come—then Emory

had needed no support, for he was naturally a fighting man.

But Miss Avaway did not keep his mother long from his mind.

Looking out on the ghostliness of the morning there came a thought to him which made him shudder:

"What would have been the effect upon her had the battle gone the other way?"

The men with whom he had had to deal were desperate men. One of them had indirectly warned him out of the country. Had he made no verbal reply to this, his remaining would have expressed defiance. Had he not conquered them at the point of the revolver, they might have done to him as Vigilantes were constantly doing to men who had done wrong according to their standard, or who-which was too often the same thing with them-stood in their way. He saw vividly a limb and a rope, and turned ashen-feeling a constriction of the throat, as he pulled at his collar. And there came to him another vision of his mother. As before, her eyes were sunken in the cavities under her brows, and there was still in them a look of pride for her son and representative, but a pride coming, not from a jubilant, but from a broken heart. His pulse quivered, and his heart almost stood still at the thought of what

might have been. The may-bes and the mighthave-beens give to some natures almost as poignant pain, or as keen pleasure, for the moment, as the ares. The advice is given to imaginative persons to pay no attention to their imaginings. The advice is good. But it is hard to follow. A man with the gout might about as well be advised to pay no attention to the pain in his great toe. But Emory had good sense. He was hard-headed to a degree. To call his imagination away from what might have been-to have it quietly by the side of reason in the presence of what was-he laid a strong hold upon it. He threw himself upon his bed. But there he could not rest. His imagination would not yield to the advances of reason, and so could not long be controlled. He still thought of his mother-of all the unrest he had given her; of her coming to be an old woman; of his leaving her, coming to this wild country and endangering not only his life, but hers also-for he could not think that she would long survive him—especially should be come to a tragical end and more especially should that end be shameful;) of- But why go on? His imagination was not alone in torturing him now. His conscience had come to its assistance. From that he fled.

He sprang to his feet and looked about for a button to touch.

Then he laughed in remembering how he had been stared at when he asked for a room with a bath at the Houston House at Whackston.

He had not made the same mistake at the Adnogal House.

There he had only asked that a pitcher of hot water be sent to his room in the morning.

The request had been so unusual that the clerk had sent for the proprietor. But it had been granted.

It was now too early for the hot water to appear. So he proceeded to get himself in shape for the day with cold water—the tin washbowl, which would not hold more than three pints, serving for a bathtub.

By the time he had bathed and shaven and gotten on clean linen, he was in a quieter state of mind. He looked at his watch. Breakfast would not be on table for more than an hour. He did not care to lie down again. He would go for a walk. He was soon on the veranda. Which way should he go? It did not matter much. All ways were nearly the same, so far as scenery was concerned. But not quite. He remembered that to the east there were a couple of mounds, which he had heard called The Twins, now hidden by the hotel. But he did not know what detours he would have to make to reach them, and he was in

no mood for either speculations or investigations. To the west and the north and the south-making a wide half circuit of the town—was the river the immediate banks of which are quite heavily wooded. The road before him led, to the right, out of the town. He felt like getting away from people. There would be few, if any, on the street at so early an hour. But they lived in the houses. And he was disposed to avoid everything associated with them. So he stepped down and started north. He had not gone far-say a quarter of a milewhen he came to a depression in the road. He was now not far from the river, along which he had noticed from the veranda a fog hung. As he descended into the depression he was aware that he was entering this fog. As he continued to descend, it became quite thick. At the bottom it was opaque and chilling. As he ascended he heard the footbeats of an approaching horse. He felt for his revolver. He had left it in his room. Did he turn back he would be overtaken, and he dared not step off to the right or the left, as the road was rudely constructed, as if it might pass through a slough. There was nothing to do but to keep right on. In a moment he was face to face with a horseman—such an horseman as he had never seen—save in a show, or some public place. He was red, and appeared to be painted redder,

though that appearance might have been produced by a red blanket which he wore with a careless grace—such as that with which the Roman is represented as wearing his toga-a grace with which one can wear nothing to which he is not born. He had feathers in his hair. He rode with a loose rein. He worked his heels incessantly against the sides of his pony. His elbows were far from his body, and his arms went as do the wings of a hen in a hurry. His hands were in ceaseless motion—the left holding the reins purposelessly, in the right the short-handled and long, plaited-lashed whip, which is known in the Southwest as the quirque. He was armed with revolvers and a repeating-rifle, for use, and with a bow and a quiver of arrows, for show, or for knocking over the small game of the prairies—such as jackrabbits and prairie chickens—to the saving of more valuable ammunition.

These particulars of the horseman's mount, dress, bearing and arms Emory afterwards remembered very vividly. At the moment of the meeting the sensitive plate of his mind must have been very sensitive indeed. Still he had never been so nearly stampeded. When this Indian warrior loomed upon him out of the fog, all the stories of Indian warfare, treachery and cruelty that he had ever heard or read darted into his mind. He re-

sisted a disposition to run. Then for a moment there came a paralysis over him. This partially passed, had he had his revolver he might have reached for it and begun shooting. But fortunately he was entirely unarmed. The Indian said:

"How!" and reached out to shake hands.

Emory misunderstood the motion and stepped back.

Then the Indian put on a severe look, and demanded:

"Money!"

Emory reached in his pocket and gave all the change he had.

Then came another demand:

"More!"

By this time Emory had sufficiently recovered self-possession to shake his head, point along the road, and say, in a voice which was not without indication that he expected to be obeyed, though it did shake somewhat:

"Ride on!"

And, after he had made a sign of friendship, accompanied by a self-abasing smile, on the Indian went. Realizing how completely he had been bluffed, and with a sickly smile of disgust for himself, Emory continued his constitutional. He had not gone far before he came to an Indian encampment. Seeing some whites, he approached them,

and learned that the Indians were of the Pawnee tribe, which was being taken to the Indian Territory. The Indian whom he had met was in the employ of the Government. The whites may have wondered at the singular smile which came over their questioner's face, as he turned to retrace his steps. It was one of self-contempt. He had never been so fully aware that he had a white feather among his natural impedimenta. But has there ever been man so brave that he did not feel fear on occasion? Had he been armed, and had anything like a chance, he would have met the horseman, not fearlessly probably, but boldly, had he been the incarnate Mitche Manito. But he was not armed. He had come out without the reliance of every American—especially of every American at the West. And he had been alone, not only on the lonely prairie but in a fog, in the presence of -whom? Barring the ghost, the most terrible being that the negro story-teller paints, or used to paint—to say nothing of the yellow-backed fiction of forty years ago-to the fancy of the child of the South. Not considering the printed fiction, the one who, before he was in his teens, in the circle before the open fire in the old kitchen, with the shadows drawing near, the flames flickering out, the coals dying down and bedtime approaching, heard uncle and auntie vying with each other in

telling ghost and Indian stories, and then crawled off for the night—so terrified that he dared scarcely breathe lest he call some phantom or savage upon him—will appreciate the state of our hero's mind when that redman, that armed redman, that apparently painted and really feathered redman, rode upon him out of the fog, and will not wonder that he was first nearly stampeded, then paralyzed, that he gave up his money on demand, and that for a second—a fact that I have held back so far in the hope that my historical conscience might allow me to not record it—his only regret was that he had not more to give.

CHAPTER XV.

BALDY.

When he entered the office upon his return, he saw groups of men picking their teeth. Had he needed further evidence that breakfast was on, he would have had it in the numbers whom he could see, through a door which opened into the front hallway, approaching the dining-room, in the rattle of dishes, which was almost as distinct as if the service was going on in his presence, the smell of food, which could not have been much more distinct had there been no pretension of partitions, and the hurrying to and fro of waiters, glimpses of whom were caught through a door opposite the one of which I have spoken.

Though he had been addressed by more than one on the veranda, he had not stopped; for he had seen in the road, at the other end of it, the horseman with whom he had so recently had meeting.

He saw by a quick glance which this now dismounted horseman gave him, that he was recognized.

Those about the savage were treating him with anything but respect.

This brought the blood to Emory's face.

What if he should say something about their meeting!

Did he know enough English to do so?

That he might not was Emory's inward prayer.

This prayer was still in his mind when he entered the dining-room.

It was driven into his subconsciousness by the beckening of a hand—a slender, white hand

It was the hand of Miss Day Gurnsey—the daughter of the landlord.

She was a typical Western girl. She was open and free and unaffected as the day—after which she might appropriately have been named. She was a blonde. She was slight, supple, graceful.

That he responded to her beckon by going to her, I need not say.

As has been recorded, he met her at supper on the evening of his arrival.

He had met her at every meal since, and frequently between meals.

At the first and at the subsequent of these meals she had been surrounded by a court of admirers.

Though it was breakfast, the same thing was true now.

When he reached her, she said:

"When I came in I made inquiry of the head waiter, and found that you had not yet breakfasted. I have saved this seat for you, hoping that you might show up before I was through."

At this she turned back a chair which she had leaned against the table beside her.

As she did so, two or three young fellows who had been standing by, each of them hoping he might be requested to take the place, moved off to other tables, one of them saying, good-naturedly:

"When a preacher's about we poor devils have no show!"

"If you always behaved yourselves as the preachers do, you would have more show!" replied Miss Day, as good-naturedly. "You drink and smoke, and play cards, and expect to be treated as if you were nice!"

At this Emory laughed, and said:

"Though I think you're right, Miss Gurnsey, I can't help regretting that you don't like fellows who smoke; I——"

"Psha!" broke in Miss Day. "I was only talking to those fellows! Were I a man—"

"Thank goodness you're not!" said a young lawyer—one of the number who sat at Miss Day's

rather large table—and received more unanimous applause than would have come to him, in all probability, had he said something much more brilliant but of different import.

The Queen bent her little head in a sweeping bow.

Emory said:

"I've just returned from a delightful matutinal walk!"

"What does that mean?" asked the Queen. "I have heard of matutinal drinks, but I never before heard of a matutinal walk!"

With an outright laugh, Emory replied:

"You don't take me for a schoolteacher, do you? It's bad enough to be a clergyman!"

"But do tell me, please! What does matutinal mean?" pleaded the Queen.

"Are you in earnest?" asked Emory.

"Of course!"

What could be done but comply?

"Oh!" she exclaimed, in a rippling voice. "I thought it meant a liquor, like tarantula-juice, of which the men here are always talking!"

At this there was loud laughter, in which the Queen did not join. She asked Emory:

"How did you come to walk? Why didn't you ride? You do ride, don't you?"

"Oh, yes!" was the reply. "A little! I haven't

had time to ride since I arrived, but it must be splendid riding over the prairies!"

"Indeed it is!" exclaimed the Queen, with enthusiasm. "Wouldn't you like to try it?"

"Indeed I would!"

"When?"

"Whenever you say!"

"This afternoon?"

"Yes; if I can get a mount."

"What's that?"

"A horse."

"Oh! I'll attend to that!"

Turning to a member of her suite, she asked:

"Can I have Dollie?"

"Yes."

"Can you furnish Mr. Emberson with a horse?"
"Yes."

This answer was made with a grin, which, in addition to the fact that while he and Miss Day were talking riding he thought he saw the court exchanging glances, caused Emory to say:

"There is but one sort of a horse which I would refuse to mount, and that's the bucker! And were I to get on him by mistake I would simply jump, roll, or fall off! The getting off would be more important to me than the manner in which it might come about!"

Had not the Queen been of such a perfectly sim-

ple and unsuspicious nature she could not have presided over her court so successfully. Had she been only a little suspicious she would have noticed the grin above mentioned, and the meaning glances. The grin came from Squire Riley—justice of the peace and liveryman.

There is nothing which the Westerner enjoys so much as playing a practical joke on the tenderfoot.

And, worse, he has a good memory, and ever afterwards uses it as a rail on which to ride its victim.

These things Emory knew, for he had worked sufficiently on Western papers to be less of a tenderfoot than those among whom he found himself took him to be.

He arose from the table and walked out of the dining-room with the Queen, thinking:

"Those fellows have it in for me. But their looks indicate that what I have said will prevent them from attempting to spring a bucker on me, or having a bucker spring me. We'll see! But whatever comes I'll do what I can to turn the joke on the jokers—risk much to that end. The chances are against my succeeding in this. In that case—no matter how hard I may find it—I shall join in the laugh against myself!"

The train of thought which led to this conclu-

sion might have been impossible to him had he been simply a theologue.

But what other sizing up of the situation would have been possible to a boxer and a journalist?

In the hallway he bade good morning to the Queen, having arranged to meet her in the public parlor at noon and conduct her to dinner, and stepped on the veranda.

The Indian was still in the road, shooting arrows at coins, in the split end of a stick, the other end of which was thrust in the ground, some twenty-five yards from him.

He had had plenty of time to get away.

Emory had been, and was still, anxious that he should be gone.

But he was what all Indians are not—a good shot, and was making money.

This was enough, but it was not all that kept him.

He did not know the character of Emory's desire with regard to him.

Getting away from the Adnogal House was not getting away from his tribe, or from the authorities.

He knew that should the one from whom he had demanded money on the highway complain to the latter it would go hard enough with him.

When Emory appeared, he knocked a coin from

the end of the stick, rushed to it, picked it up, and, as he pocketed it, approached his acquaintance of the fog, and said, in the best English:

"We have met before!"

That acquaintance laughingly replied:

"Yes; but don't bother about that! Go on with your shooting! I saw through the dining-room window that you are an expert with the bow and arrow, and it is always a pleasure to see one do what he does well!"

He saw that he had nothing to fear from this quarter, and did as he was told.

When Emory had seen enough of the shooting at coins, having lighted another cigar, he went to his room, with the purpose of giving some attention to the sermons which—this being Saturday—he must preach on the morrow.

When we remember what he had been going through in the immediate past—first, the trouble in his parish, making up his mind where he would next cast his lot, bidding good-bye to his mother; then, his railway trip, entering an untried field, watching the cowboys in Whackston, getting the drop on Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cowskin, the adventure with the Vigilantes, meeting the savage in the fog—remembering these things of his immediate past, and taking into the account the uncertainties of his immediate future, the fact that

his mind would not work is not to be greatly wondered at, or to be considered vastly to its discredit.

After a time, he gave up the attempt to think, threw himself on his bed, with what had probably as much to do with the inability of his mind to work as any one or all of the things mentioned—light brown hair combed smoothly over white temples—alive in his memory, fondled by his imagination, and went—sound asleep.

Who has ever had love-dreams in broad daylight—unless he was able to drop silken curtains?

As this was before the day of bath-rooms in Breezemead, or anywhere else "beyond the Mississippi," it was also before the day of silken curtains.

So Emory had no love-dreams.

But he had that which he very much needed—refreshing sleep.

He was awakened by the first dinner-bell.

Miss Day was awaiting him in the parlor, in riding-habit.

They had but entered the dining-room when the court appeared.

Prominent in it was Squire Riley; for he was not only Justice of the Peace and liveryman, he was also handsome young man and great admirer of the Queen.

As the company arose after the meal—though it

was at public table, those about the Queen always remained scated till she set the example of rising —he said:

'Miss Gurnsey, I am short of hands to-day. Would you be willing to walk around to the stable?"

"Certainly!"

Emory saw in this request the first move in getting the game into the trap. He glanced at Miss Day, wondering if she were party to the attempt. The simple, child-like expression of her face—in which there was nothing but pleasant anticipation of a ride—convinced him that she was not. As, half an hour later, they walked towards the stable, she asked:

"Don't you smoke?"

"Yes."

"Haven't you a cigar?"

"Yes."

"Why don't you light it?"

"Will you allow me?"

"Yes; I don't mind the scent of a cigar in the house; I perfectly dote upon it in the open air!"

So Emory took from his pocket a box of stormmatches which had been given him, at his starting on his stage-ride for Breezemead, by the proprietor of the Houston House at Whackston, and lighted up. As they were nearing the stable, Miss Day said: "I hope you may get as good a goer as Dollie! If you do, we'll have a fine gallop!"

When they reached the stable, they found Dollie saddled. And a beautiful, trim, lithe little mare she was—just the mount for such an exquisite hint of a woman as the Queen.

"And where is Mr. Emberson's horse?" asked Her Majesty.

"In his stall," answered the Squire, with a glance at the court, which was assembled, to a man.

Said the Queen, including everybody in a glance: "Kind of you to come to see us off!"

Thought Emory:

"To see the fun!"

Said the Squire to the attendants—of whom, it struck Emory, there was not a marked scarcity:

"Come, boys! Get a move on you! Hustle! Get Dollie outside!"

Dollie was led out. The Queen followed her. Emory followed the Queen—stepping in front of the Squire. He proposed that no one but himself should give her foot the hand for the mount. When she was mounted the two men returned to the stable—where the rest of the court had remained—evidently, to Emory's mind, in waiting for something.

The Squire glanced about with an expression, which said: "Now for the fun!" and, with a malicious grin, ordered the attendants to:

"Bring out Baldy!"

When Baldy came Emory saw why the Squire had left an attendant with Dollie and the Queen, with instructions to keep them well to one side of the doors. He was villainous-looking. His eyes were somewhat protruding, wide-open, wild. His red nostrils were thin and distended. His nose was Roman. His ears were thin and back. Excepting one white foot and a white streak down the middle of his face, he was black and glossy as a crow. He looked the devil incarnate. Such must have been the war horse of the greatest of the Romans, whom none but Cæsar himself could mount. Emory glanced at his feet the second time to make sure that one of them was not cloven. Two attendants—one on each side—were hanging desperately to his bits. The court—the Squire more closely than anyone else-looked at Emory to see what effect the horse's appearance might have upon him. He asked:

"Does he buck?"

"No!" answered the Squire.

What his special trick was Emory thought to have been intimated by the care which had been

taken to have Dollie and the Queen well away rrom before the doors.

These doors were within a few inches of being open as widely as possible.

Attendants rushed forward and added these inches to the opening.

Emory walked up, saw that the girths were all right; examined the stirrup straps, to be sure that they were of proper length and stoutness; glanced at the bit-rings and the reins, said: "Now!" grasped the reins with his left hand, as he stuck his left foot in the stirrup, and was in the saddle.

Baldy sank till his belly touched the floor and both of Emory's heels were on the planks, then rose, and, with a snort, darted from the stable as if he had been shot from a catapult.

As he did so, Emory did not tighten the reins, and quietly glanced round on the spectators, knocking the ashes from the cigar which he held in his right hand. Said the Squire:

"He'll do!"

Baldy was magnificently constructed, powerful, and the pace he took was tremendous.

Emory made no attempt to check him.

This seemed to surprise him.

Emory sank his heels into him.

This seemed to give him further surprise.

Emory suddenly tightened the reins.

He brought his teeth together with a snap.

But they missed the bit.

He was Emory's captive.

He was turned about and returned to the stable at full speed.

The court cheered—excepting the Squire.

He hung his head.

He was as much overcome as was Baldy.

The Queen said:

"I hope, Mr. Emberson, that you don't think that I had anything to do with this attempt to play a practical joke on you!"

"I do not!" was the reply, "and can well afford

to hold no spite against anyone!"

The Queen flashed on the court:

"Gentlemen, I am ashamed of you! and especially of you, Squire Riley! A stranger—"

Emory—knowing that had the trick succeeded, as it certainly would have done had he been a poorer horseman, the Queen would have laughed at him as heartily as anyone—said:

"Oh, never mind! Let's be off!"

And away they went.

Within an hour of supper-time they were back, and Emory, wearied just enough for the quieting of the mercury within him, was sitting on the veranda, when the Queen, still in riding-habit, came out, accompanied by a young man, and said:

"Mr. Emberson, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Avaway—Mr. Stephen Avaway."

Emory rose, took the not overly strong looking young fellow by the hand, and, the Queen withdrawing, invited him to a seat.

They had not talked long before the young man spoke of being from Charlottesville.

The name of the town and the name of the speaker brought vividly to Emory's mind a young lady whom he had once known at school.

She proved to be the young man's sister.

Here—as so often happens to strangers meeting in a new country—was a point of contact.

But what was of more importance to Emory was that here was a point of contact for him with the young man's younger sister.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DREAM-HORSE.

EMORY was glad enough to go to bed early that night. The quicksilver was still. He was worn out, but not nervous. He fell asleep almost as soon as his head touched the pillow. There is no nerve-sedative equal to a long gallep—one being at home in the saddle, on a satisfactory horse, in pleasant company—especially when one has not ridden for a considerable time.

Then he was under the influence of a spiritual sedative as well as a physical—that of having passed successfully through danger, which had come in a course which he had adopted in accordance to the dictates of his conscience and sense of manliness.

In the morning he remembered but one dream.

It was of being mounted on a more energetic horse than even Baldy—of riding, with a sense of absolute freedom, not on earth, but through space.

And he was not alone.

Another rode near him—on a mare which reminded him of Dollie, but which was as much more active than she as his mount was more energetic than Baldy.

This companion had great, confiding eyes, which thrilled him when he caught them.

And they did not turn away from him.

They were fastened upon him, as his were fixed upon the way through the stars.

They were not the eyes of the Queen; for her eyes were a heavenly blue, while these were gray.

He awakened thoroughly rested, energetically hopeful.

This was fortunate; it being the morning of his first Sunday in Breezemead, and the impression which a clergyman makes on that Sunday in a new parish being a potent factor in his success or failure in that parish—as everybody knows.

The interior of St. John's Church was larger than was exteriorly indicated.

It seated several hundred people.

On this day, it was crowded at matins.

This may not surprise one who knows anything of a small town—especially of a small Western town.

In such a town, when anyone knows anything in the way of news everybody knows it at once—as if telepathically. This is the more certainly true the more important the news—not that there is any news, in such a town, that is not important.

And to it the most important of all news is the arrival of a new preacher—no matter what his denomination.

At the West at the time when the events of this history occurred, there were no parsons, clergymen, or priests.

Emory had not been long in Breezemead before he was asked if he had met the Roman Catholic preacher.

The news that there was a new preacher in town would have filled St. John's Church, upon the morning in mind—even though the Episcopal Church, because of its ritual, was at that time the most unpopular of churches, at the West—and left the other places of worship empty, had it been large enough to hold the whole church-going population of Breezemead—to which end it would have needed to be large indeed; for it is in the nature of the human species to congregate somewhere; and I do not know that up to this time a real theatrical or operatic troupe had visited Breezemead, or that a circus had been in its environs.

Breezemead had a dance-hall, of course. Could there have been a Western town, so long ago, without a dance-hall?

But the dance-hall in Breezemead was not so well patronized as was the one in Whackston.

Though most of the Breezemeadians had left God at the Mississippi, they still had some prejudices of education and inheritance against the devil and his ways—the chief of which was then the dance-hall.

The very word dance horrified a large percentage of them.

They were largely of Puritan stock.

This was true of the Vigilantes—excepting Dick Erskine and Hugh, who were of Cavalier origin—though Dick's mother was, through force of circumstances, a Methodist.

Though they were capable of doing much more questionable things, the "respectable" Breezemeadians would not touch cards, or dance, ordinarily—where they were liable to be seen by anyone who might "give them away."

Consequently about the only amusement—excepting an annual community-ball; which could not have been had not the Puritan come to see that he, for material, if for no higher reason, owed some concession to those of different moral standards; to one of which I hope to take the reader before this history terminates—about the only amusement, I say, which the better class of the Breezemeadians had was church.

A new preacher to them was what a new prima donna, or tragedian, or comedian is to the same class of a large city.

So it is not to be wondered at that St. John's Church was crowded to hear Emory's first sermon—or to see how he delivered it.

But every population—even the better class of that population—has exceptions to the general truth with regard to it—persons who revolt against, or never think of obeying, the general rules which govern it.

In every great city there are wealthy men who belong to no club, and many who are abundantly able who never attend the play or the opera—some because they have no taste for the club, play, or the opera, some because of a disposition to take the direction opposite to that taken by others—some because they are hitched to a task which takes all their time.

Though the great mass of the population did, there were those in Breezemead who did not attend church.

Among these were a goodly number of the court. When Emory came down to a rather late breakfast, it was assembled in the dining-room, eating and chatting away—as many as could find seats there—at the Queen's table—the remainder at tables near at hand.

As he took a seat which the Queen had reserved at her right hand for him, she said:

"We have been talking of going to church this morning!"

"I hope that Your Majesty never thinks of not doing that!" responded Emory, with an inclination of the head.

"Oh!" she replied, "I always go to church! The question had reference to these gentlemen!"

One—a lawyer, Green by name—said super-ciliously:

"I'm too busy to go to church!"

"You don't work on Sunday, do you?" asked the Queen.

"The very best day to work!" answered Mr. Green. "One is not so liable to interruption!"

"I always talk about having the most to do when I have nothing to do!" said a young man of about Emory's age, with eyes of the same light-blue color, hair of the same dark-brown, the same sort of slightly freckled complexion. He wore gold-bowed spectacles, as did Emory. The resemblance would have been remarkable had not Emory been cleanly shaven and the other worn a full beard, closely trimmed at the cheeks and to a Sir Walter Raleigh point. Noticing an amused and questioning look in Emory's eyes, the Queen said:

"Excuse me! I had forgotten, Mr. Emberson, that you and Mr. Walker have not met!"

At the name Walker Emory started.

With a bow to Emory, followed by one to the Queen, Mr. Walker said:

"I live in Butternut City, where I run a paper, or, rather, where a paper runs me. I"—with another bow to the Queen, which brought the blood to her face, and caused her to look away—"would be here oftener than I am, were it not that conditions have drawn a dead-line about Breezemead for me. It wouldn't do for me"—with a laugh—"to be here before the sun rises, or after he goes down, any more than it would for the editor of The Stunner"—Breezemead's leading paper—"to be in Butternut City between those diurnal astronomical events."

"You came up to hear the new preacher, I presume!" said Mr. Green, with something like a sneer.

Mr. Walker, bowing courteously to Emory, said:
"No. I'm on my way to Whackston. I had intended starting on directly after breakfast. But, having met Mr. Emberson"—another bow to Emory—"I confess to some curiosity to hear him. I have a good team. I can make the drive in the afternoon by hurrying a little. Then the moon is full, the nights are pleasant, and so I do not

know that it matters much whether I get to Whackston before sundown—especially as long before that I would be out of this county—the only one in America, so far as I know, in which there is anyone who would be in the least benefited by harm's coming to me!"

"Well, Mr. Walker," said Emory, "as I'm to be the preacher, I would naturally feel a little modesty in inviting you to church at St. John this morning; but I presume, you having expressed a disposition to be there, I may safely say that I would be glad to see you!"

"I'm comin', too!" said Squire Riley, to whom Emory had bowed cordially upon entering. "When I was a boy in Sunday school, I used to hear about the horse of the Apocalypse—I don't remember what—but something. If you can ride him as well as you did Baldy yesterday, you're a dandy in heavenly as well as in earthly horsemanship!"

In the midst of the laugh which this awakened, Emory, his breakfast completed, excusing himself to the Queen, rose to go.

Not liking the background of the conversation into which he had been pushed, Mr. Green asked, in the high, pointed tone peculiar to him:

"Say, Mr. Preacher, a lawyer was the first man to meet Christ, wasn't he?"

Said Emory:

"I haven't the time to pass upon the question now; but, admitting it to be true, from what I know of lawyers I would say that it is a bit of history not likely to repeat itself!"

Mr. Green turned red, and the rest of the court burst into another laugh, the Squire guffawing and pounding the table with the handle of his knife.

I have said that, the day before, when Emory tried to think, realizing that he was on the eve of having to preach, his intellectual machinery would not work.

On reaching his room now there was the same trouble.

But it had come to be nine o'clock.

In another hour and a half he would be in the chancel, vested, beginning the service.

He must, at least, select a text.

The one which came to him was:

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

It may be wondered why he did not take an old sermon.

This wonder would not come to one who knows Mr. Emberson.

He had no more an already prepared sermon to his name then than he has now.

The canonical sermons which he had been compelled to prepare and present to the Examining Chaplains before his priesting—where were they? He did not know.

His thought has always been: What is the use of writing a sermon! When it is preached, that is the end of it—so far as its being a production is concerned. And if the same thing be not true so far as its being an influence is concerned, the preacher may consider himself lucky!

When he stepped to the lectern—which served also as a pulpit—and read his text, the first question which came to his mind was:

"Who is my neighbor?"

Then came: "How well should I love myself?"
Then: "How well should I love my neighbor?"

In putting the third question, he became aware of Miss Avaway.

She had played the organ, and led the really good choir in the hymns and canticles.

For the sermon, she sat modestly on a chair at the end of the organ towards the east wall.

He caught her eyes.

They had the same expression with which they had regarded him in the dream-ride.

The same high spirit came to him which he had felt in rushing among the stars.

He said:

"Every soul is an individual. There is a narrow sphere within which it is emperor. It is over against the universe. It must take care of itself

and of its own. It has rights. It must see that nobody overrides those rights. It must defend itself and its interests at all hazards. It will sometime be called to give an account of this stewardship, as certainly as of any other. It must fight those who come—fight them with their own weapons. There is but one thing, for instance, with which the devil can be fought, and that is fire. But one must be magnanimous. He should burn even the devil as little as possible. When a strong man, armed, comes upon me to despoil me, it will not do for me to meet him with naked hands. I must meet him with arms! If I do not take care of self, of its territory, of its belongings, the Over Lord will sometime condemn me-when He comes, or when He sends for me. It seems to me that there has been a lot of wrong teaching in the name of the Galilean—teaching, basis for which is not found in what He is reported to have taught! He was the most manly man the world has known. In quoting the commandment which is my text from the Old Testament, I have no doubt He emphasized the 'as.' 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' While he said: 'Put up thy sword; for he who taketh the sword shall die by the sword!' He also said: 'Sell thy coat and buy two swords!' Did he spare His enemies—the Pharisees? Did He not call them 'whited sepul-

chers?' Must his eyes not have gleamed with wrath when He cast out those who were defiling the Temple? But, it may be asked, did He not say at the end: 'A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another!' Certainly. But He gave this as the law of the Church which He was founding-in which everyone was to be governed by the law of love-from which the one not so governed, but under the dominance of the law of selfishness, was to be cast out, looked upon as a heathen and a stranger. Were all mankind in the Empire of Love and governed by its law, then no one would need to protect himself, his territory, his belongings. But up to the time that all are externally and internally Christian, each is subject to that need. But in acting under it one must be careful to not infringe upon the rights of another, any further than that other would be disposed to infringe upon his rights, and to not maintain the position such an infringement may give him longer than is absolutely necessary. The Christ said to forgive 'seventy times seven,' but he did not say to not kill the wild beast which is trying to kill you—to not ward off the blow when you are attacked—to not incarcerate the one who would incarcerate you, if he could. The truth in the matter is that such a thing as forgiveness without repentance upon the part of the one who has

done the wrong is an impossibility. Self-protection is the first law of nature—nature is God's and, so, Christianity antagonizes, can antagonize, no law of nature. The mistake which has been made is that of attempting to apply the policy which the Christ gave for the governance of His Church to the every-day life of the individual among those who have never felt the movements of the principle of love within them. Were a man in this country -I would fancy, from the little I have seen of it -to turn 'the other cheek also' to everybody, he would soon have no cheek to turn. Should a man be struck simply because he is a Christian-were that possible any more—he should not resent it. But should he allow himself to be wronged as a private individual without resentment or protest, would he not be failing in his duty to himself, to other individuals, to the community, and to God?"

I make haste to admit that this utterance is more heathen than Christian.

But the faithful historian must record many things which he would gladly have pass into oblivion.

Still no one can be injured by an honest utterance.

And that the young preacher was honest in this case, no one hearing him could question.

His delivery was very energetic-with that en-

ergy which comes not of calculation, but is as spontaneous as the bursting out of a fountain.

By the time he came to the portion which I have reported all embarrassment was gone; his attitudes and gestures were free and graceful—natural; his voice—of the compass of which there was no evidence in his reading—rang out like a bugle; and his face had the tense, set, earnest look which it must have had in his dream-ride through the constellations.

As he concluded, and turned for the ascription, he again caught Miss Avaway's eyes.

In them there was a rapt look.

She had evidently been carried out of, and away from herself.

It was only when he was in the midst of the offertory sentences, that she—with a catch of the breath—blushed deeply, quietly took her place at the organ, and began a voluntary, which lasted through the passing of the basins, and merged into the prelude of: "All things come of Thee, Oh, Lord!—" at the presentation.

Many tarried after the service to meet the new rector.

His hand was not in a normal state for as much as an hour afterwards, from the hearty squeezes which it received.

Almost everyone had a word of praise for "the effort."

Said Mr. Walker:

"I have been repaid for waiting, even if I do not reach Whackston before midnight!"

Said Mr. Bynson—the somebody within actually forgetting to pull the string:

"You said to me a day or so ago that you never paid attention to what was none o' your business. Preaching being your business, you have certainly paid some attention to it! You know how to do it, anyway!"

Said Doctor Gray—with scarcely a hint of the post-nasal snicker:

"I think this climate will agree with you!"

Said Dick Erskine, in his bluff, hearty, not uncultured way:

"You are something with the gospel gun as well as with the more ordinary sort!"

"Yes," said Mr. Nothym, who stood by to take the hand as soon as Dick should drop it, "he more than made us shake our heads; he hit each of them plump in the centre!"

Squire Riley also stood by.

He next took the hand, saying—changing the figure:

"And you, as a rider, leave nothing to desire!
You managed the apocalyptical hoss quite as well

as you did Baldy. You'll do! When you feel like a gallop, come around to the stable!"

The next to take the now numb hand was Mr. Gurnsey.

Showing the whole cemetery of dead-white teeth, he said:

"I doubt if a Methodist Bishop could beat that!"
—the highest compliment he could pass; for he thought that the best preachers in the world were the Methodist preachers, and that the best of the Methodist preachers were the Methodist Bishops.

The last to take the hand was Hugh.

With his slowest smile, and his longest grin, he drawled:

"Blood wi-ll te-ll, E-m!"

CHAPTER XVII.

PASTORAL CALL.

AFTER the service Hugh walked to the hotel with Emory, and accompanied him to his room.

But he did not feel like talking.

Seeing this Hugh did not remain.

He gone, Emory threw himself on his bed.

But the dinner-bell soon rang, and he arose and descended to the dining-room.

The court was assembled; but there were fewer of it at the Queen's table than usual; several of its places were taken by others.

At the Queen's left sat Miss Avaway.

At the Queen's right was reserved the usual place for him.

The other places of the court which had been taken were occupied by persons to whom the exigencies of this history make it necessary that a little attention be paid.

One was an old gentleman—tall, slender, with a pronounced Roman nose, high cheek bones, coarse, perfectly straight, faded hair, thin whiskers, a little more nearly gray, protruding brows, a receding forehead, and a good head.

Another, one of those elderly ladies, concerning whom one involuntarily says: "What a beautiful girl she must have been!"—of the Fanny Fern class—of the mental temperament, with very large ideality, the phrenologist would have said.

Then, two young men—the first of whom had lost the outer phalanges of his index and middle fingers, who had a cow-lick at the right of his forehead, which caused his stiff, jet-black hair to stand stubbornly up at that point, who was very dark, with hazel eyes (his temperament was emphatically of the sanguine sort)—the second of whom—as light as the first was dark—looked at the newcomer with a meaningless smile.

It was he with whom Emory had had the conversation on the veranda, in which it had transpired that an older sister of his was a point of contact for them.

It had, also, transpired in that conversation that he was a brother of the prima donna of the concert—the effects of which, at the time of the conversation, Emory was still so keenly feeling.

He concluded at once that the other strangers

at the Queen's table were relatives of the same young lady.

This conclusion was confirmed by the Queen's

saying:

"Mr. Emberson, you have met Miss Avaway and her brother Stephen; allow me to present to you Mr. Avaway, Mrs. Avaway, and Mr. Henry Avaway."

The conversation became at once general. Emory took but little part in it. As a result of this, the Queen said:

"I am afraid you're not feeling well, or are you fatigued, Mr. Emberson?"

"Since the service," replied Emory, "I am what I have very seldom been—what I have never been, to the same extent, before—hoarse."

Miss Avaway did not look up from her plate; but Emory could feel a wave of anxiety coming from her. Mrs. Avaway looked sympathetic. Mr. Stephen grinned, not idiotically, but emptily. Mr. Henry paid no attention. Mr. Avaway said:

"Thou shouldst not be surprised at that! A great many, in coming to this country, are affected, at first, in that way. The air is very dry, and filled with alkali dust."

"Thou shouldst not discourage a new-comer, father! You must pay no attention to him, Mr. Emberson!" said Miss Avaway.

"Thou'rt right, Martha! In this country, you must listen to the young, Mr. Emberson!" said the older brother.

"We'll have to report thee to the Vigilantes!" said the younger brother to the father; and to Emory, with his smile: "You've heard of them, haven't you?"

Emory making no reply, the Queen said:

"You must give him time to come across our animals!"

"Thou dost not like them, then!" said Mr. Avaway, with a laugh in which there was an opening of the mouth, but no mirth.

"You mustn't answer him, Day! James, I'm surprised at thy opening the way for a young girl to express herself on such a subject!" said Mrs. Avaway, with more energy than Emory would have expected from her.

What struck Emory as remarkable was that while Mr. Avaway used the grave forms in addressing anyone, his wife and children used them only in addressing him, or each other.

Here was a psychological problem.

But he was too thoroughly taken by a person in the objective to give attention to anything in the subjective.

The meal over, Emory should have gone directly to his room.

Instead, he went with the Queen, the elder Avaways, and Miss Avaway to the parlor.

There he incidentally learned something of the

hospitality of Western people.

The Avaway ranch was some five miles out on the prairie.

The Avaways were good church people—disposed to be at all the services.

It was too much to drive home after matins and back for evensong.

Then there was the Sunday school, which met in the afternoon, and in which they were efficient workers.

They were overwhelmed with invitations to Sunday dinners and suppers.

Mrs. Avaway accepted them with avidity.

She was very social—loved to chat, especially about church matters—was very hospitable herself—and had not a hint of pride in her composition.

While, on the other hand, Mr. Avaway, though social, would rather be at home than anywhere else, though hospitable, did not like to be overrun, and was extremely approbative.

He would have been cut to the quick by having it intimated that he was disposed to sponge.

But he wanted to be at all the services, and to serve in the Sunday school.

He tried to make arrangements for stabling his horses and for meals for himself and family.

But no one would take them for a consideration; while everybody wanted them on the ground of hospitality.

He resisted this kindly openness of disposition for a time.

Then he yielded.

And his wife and all others were happy.

On account of his hoarseness, Emory excused himself from Sunday school that afternoon.

When everybody else was gone, he went to his room and lay down, thinking that he would get a nap.

But that he could not compass.

The mercury was quivering within him.

While the ladies were preparing for Sunday school he had remained in the parlor.

Not knowing that he was there, Miss Avaway had come in alone.

When she had seen him, her eyes had dropped, and the blood had rushed to her neck and face.

She had trembled.

He had said nothing, but passed out before another entered.

Whatever may be the case now, hospitality and naturalness were the distinguishing characteristics of the West thirty years ago.

And naturalness is, of course, regardless of conventionalities.

Of this Emory had illustration that evening.

Wanting to not talk, he had not gone down to supper till he was pretty sure that the dining-room would be empty, and returned from there immediately to his room.

The time approaching for church, he slipped on a light overcoat and started.

Still caring to not talk, he passed the parlor door—which, as it opened upon the main hallway, he could not avoid—without glancing towards it.

But at that moment at least two pairs of eyes were looking out through it—those of the Queen and those of Miss Avaway.

They saw him.

Then they scampered to the place where young ladies keep such things, stuck on their bonnets, flung on their wraps, and hurried to the street.

Emory was trudging along, his hands in his overcoat pockets, his head down, thinking about what he was going to say in the way of a sermon, and wondering whether he was likely to be able to say it, when he was startled by having his arms taken—not much startled, however; for the hands which were laid upon them were light.

He glanced to the left.

There was the Queen.

To the right.

There was Miss Avaway.

Smilingly, of course, he took his hands out of his pockets, that the young ladies might have the bends of his elbows more comfortably.

The Queen looked straight into his eyes with a laugh.

Miss Avaway gave him only a glance, which said: "Forgive me! I had to do it!" and looked down with a fascinating blush.

Had he dared, Emory would have said:

"Don't worry! It wouldn't have done for you to not follow the lead of the Queen in this matter!"

As it was, he simply slightly pressed Miss Avaway's hand to his side.

This seemed to reassure her, and she joined in the chat, which was rather light for a clergyman on the way to a service—or would have been so considered at the East.

Even at the West, Emory was rather thankful that none of the older church people heard it.

The church was again crowded.

Emory's hoarseness did not trouble him much.

When he had helped Miss Avaway into the family carriage, returned to the hotel with the Queen, and reached his room, he did not feel dissatisfied with the day's work—flattered himself, in-

deed, that he had not made a bad start in his new parish.

When Mr. and Mrs. Avaway found that Emory had known their older daughter, they were doubly anxious that he should come to see them.

The very next afternoon he and the Queen were out for a gallop.

When again Dollie and Baldy had carried them a mile or so, he asked:

"Don't you find it pleasant to have an objective point?"

"Yes! Where shall we go?"

"You decide! You know a good deal more about the country than I do!"

"We are on the way to the Avaways!"

"I haven't been there yet; I ought to call."

So to the Avaways they went.

They were cordially received.

The Avaway home was in disorder; for the Avaways had arrived but a few weeks before, and their settlement was not yet completed.

The house upon the claim which Mr. Avaway had bought had but four rooms, two downstairs, two up.

He had brought with him an addition, framed at the East, which local carpenters had just gotten through putting up.

Though getting things in place was not yet com-

Avaway home—the same air which Emory had noticed about the Avaways themselves—especially about the father, the mother and the daughter—an air which he remembered as hovering about the older daughter.

In the reigning disorder there were points of order.

Crystalization had begun.

Its points were a piano, which could be seen against a wall, through a confusion of furniture, and a bookcase, against the opposite wall, to be seen through an equal confusion of furniture.

This case was particularly attractive to Emory from the fact that he had been away from books for some weeks, and he made his way towards it, circumventing a wire mattress and squeezing between the detached head of a bed and a trunk to that end.

"Thou shouldst have waited till I came in to clear a way for thee!"

Emory turned, to see Mr. Avaway standing in a doorway.

"I told thee," said Miss Avaway, "this morning that thou shouldst attend to straightening out the things in this room at once!"

"I wouldn't enjoy the books nearly so much were there no trouble in getting at them!" said Emory. "You are too kind!" said Miss Avaway. Emory smiled.

Her addressing him in the secular forms and her father in the grave was piquant.

I have said that the father was the only one of the family who used the latter in speaking to everyone. I have also said that the wife and children used them only in addressing him or each other. They used the former exclusively in addressing any one else.

The psychological problem was returned to Emory's mind, and so occupied it that when—after shaking hands with Mr. Avaway, who immediately went away—he reached the bookcase he scarcely opened a volume which it contained, though he took a number of them down.

But there might have been another reason for this.

They were old, but not old enough to have been interesting to him had he been more of what he was to some extent—a bibliomaniac; they were also what he found it hard to forgive in even a book of respectable age—sectarian.

Among them were the Biography of Joseph John Gurney, The Life of Elizabeth Fry, Fox's Book of Martyrs, Memoirs of the Friends.

He making some remark on the character of the collection, Miss Avaway said:

"Father was reared a Quaker. But he married out of meeting. Mother was reared a Presbyterian. The Quakers didn't want to lose father. He belonged to an old Quaker family. Then"—this in a tone of quiet pride—"because of the strength of his mind and the quality of his character, he was an influence among the younger members of the meeting. The meeting took action in his case. The Elders called upon him and told him that if he would say that he was sorry for what he had done he would be forgiven. That he would not say!"

Emory laughed:

"He hadn't been married long enough!"

"And I believe that he wouldn't say that he is sorry after all these years!" came in a low. gentle voice, slightly querulous.

He turned quickly.

Mrs. Avaway had entered in time to catch the drift of the conversation, and stood looking at him with a hurt expression—the mouth puckered, one eyebrow up and the other down.

Seeing that in that presence there was no place for the most brilliant wit—much less for his leaden attempt at it, the only possible excuse for which was that he intended it for the ears of the young ladies, and that any joke at the expense of matrimony is acceptable to young ladies from an eligible young man, particularly from a young clergyman—he exclaimed:

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Avaway! No-body——"

Mrs. Avaway interrupted him by saying to her daughter:

"Martha, thou didst not say that thy father was not the only one who made sacrifice that we might marry! I was turned out of the Presbyterian Church for becoming the wife of the man of my choice. Thereafter we had nothing to do with churches till after thou wast born. Then, that our children might have church influences, we became Episcopalians."

Soon after this elucidation Mrs. Avaway went out to look after household affairs.

Emory said: "I hope, Miss Avaway, your mother was not greatly offended at my foolish remark!"

"Oh, no! And even if she were she would not think about it again, you having made apology. She is the most forgiving creature in the world! We often say that should one rob her and beg her pardon she would forgive so fully that she would not think of demanding the return of the goods!",

He changed the subject by asking:

"Have I been addressing you properly?"

"Why?"

"You having an older sister, I presume you should not be called Miss Avaway!"

"But she's married since you knew her!"

The Queen laughed.

He joined in the laugh, and said, with a profound bow:

"Well, Miss Avaway, will you not favor us with a song?"

Without making excuse, she arose, and was about to go to the piano, when there was a knock.

She opened the door, and admitted a middle-aged man, whom she introduced as the Reverend Mr. McWhorton, an old acquaintance of her father, pastor of the Methodist Church at Centreville.

When he had learned who Emory was, had given him a combative look, in shaking hands with him, the latter said:

"Miss Avaway was about to favor us with a song!"

"Shall be glad to hear it!" said Mr. McWhorton, as he took a chair with the manner of a man who is much more accustomed to sitting on the fence or on a bench.

Seating herself at the piano—as self-possessed as she could have been had she been in conventional dress instead of in an old wrapper, of a sober, Quakerish color, for which she had made no apology, there being a fitness in it, even in the

afternoon, in a house which was being brought to rights—she asked:

"What shall I sing?"

Emory asked for one of the songs which she had given at the concert—the one with which she had responded to the *encore*.

She had not the music, without which she was not sufficiently familiar with it.

Mr. McWhorton asked if she knew "When Johnnie Comes Marching Home!"

Emory bit his lip, the Queen stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth with both hands, Miss Avaway adjusted some music on the rack, and, after a moment, said:

"I've heard it, but I haven't the music for that either!"

"Then let's have just anything!" said Mr. Mc-Whorton, with a look which showed that he had a vague consciousness of having made some sort of "a break."

"That's wise!" said Emory. "Please make your own selection, Miss Avaway!"

"Sing 'Under the Daisies,' " said the Queen.

This exquisite song was then comparatively new. Emory had never heard it.

To its sweet, regretful, hopeless, yet resigned pathos, the voice of the singer was exactly suited, as perfectly as the tune is to the words.

When the song was finished, Emory remained under its spell, till the Queen said:

"You sing, don't you, Mr. Emberson?"

"No; I can appreciate music-"

"I notice!"

"But I can't produce it."

"That's my fix!" said Mr. McWhorton.

"But you can certainly sing Sunday School music, Mr. McWhorton!" said Miss Avaway.

"A little," answered the Methodist divine, as he drew from his pocket a Moody and Sankey hymn-book. "Maybe I'd better say, I can join in!"

Emory said: "I can join in, too, a little, in that sort of music!"

"Isn't it a good sort?" asked Mr. McWhorton, argumentatively.

"Oh, yes!" answered Emory, as he took the book from him and started with it towards Miss Avaway.

When they had sung "Pull for the Shore," "In the Sweet By and By," and "Nothing but Leaves," Mr. McWhorton said, wiping his brow:

"Well, I call that good hollerin', if it a'n't the best o' singin'!"

At this point Mrs. Avaway appeared and invited the party to supper.

Night was closing in as the Queen and Emory galloped back to town.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLOATING ISLAND.

During a number of weeks after this, the disposition to wander which was inherent in Emory—and for which journalism is not a sovereign remedy—would return now and again.

Neither Kansas City or Denver was far away, and he knew that he could go at any time to either of them and take a position on the staff of a daily.

He had more than once to fight desperately the inclination to do so—though he might have been aware—were not a certain little immortal blind in more regards than one—that there was an attraction in the neighborhood of Breezemead which would probably bring him back on the next train.

What first helped him in this fight was the disposition to see the county seat conflict ended—which involved his determination that no unnecessary harm should come to Editor Walker.

Then he was interested in Baldy—to see whom

he made frequent visits to the Riley stables—upon whom he took an almost daily gallop—who had come to know, first his voice, then his step—who would whinny at his approach, and manifest great joy when he mounted.

But there was another person in Crowley County in whom he was much more interested than in either Baldy or Editor Walker.

Still the battle was severe.

As a relief he would often walk to a pair of mounds, of which mention has been already made—The Twins—among the finest specimens of their kind, with which the face of the whole country is dotted—terraced elevations—each terrace indicating a stage at which the waters stopped, as they, in the course of the ages, receded, leaving what had been an archipelago a plain.

The trail to the Avaway ranch led between The Twins.

As—in lay attire; for clericals were even less suited to either riding or footing it in this country than at the East—he stood on the summit of the northern of them one morning, he—shall I say accidentally?—was faced in the direction of that ranch.

He could not see it; but distinctly in sight, about four miles away, was one of those little, white, frame buildings, with which the West was sprinkled even thirty years ago—one of those school-houses which sprang up as soon as the school-district was marked off on the map.

In all other sections of America the school-house has come when there were enough children to demand it; but at the West it was built in confidence that they would come—in the feeling that the Government is not responsible for their coming, but only for their education when they do come—as they are more sure to do there than anywhere else.

Seeing this school-house, he remembered—as he held on his hat with one hand, and tried alternately to keep his coat from blowing off and the ends of his cravat from tickling his chin and cheeks till they bled—that it stood on a high undulation which looks down into a valley in which the ranch lay, and yielded to an attraction.

At the end of an hour and a quarter's brisk walk, he found Mr. Avaway and the boys in the corral.

Though it was not they whom he had come to see, and though he was nervously anxious to knock at the door of the house, he could not well avoid stopping and talking with them a little.

But he left them as soon as courtesy would allow. He had scarcely knocked at the door when it was opened by Miss Martha.

Pouting divinely, she said:

"You seemed to have a great deal to say to the men!"

"You were looking for me, then?"

"How could I help seeing you when I was looking out of the window towards town?"

"When did you first see me?"

"When you were coming by the school-house."

"You must have good eyes to know one at that distance!"

"I always know you when you appear on the brow of the hill!"

"How?"

"By your horse's white face when you are riding, and by your white shirt-front when you are walking!"

Some days later, Doctor Gray drove up to the Adnogal House, called for Mr. Emberson, and, upon that gentleman's appearing, asked him if he would not like to take a drive of some twenty miles over the prairies—the doctor having patients at a much greater distance than that from home.

They were returning when Emory spoke of the hoarseness from which he had suffered somewhat in the course of his first Sunday in Breezemead, and which had inconvenienced him increasingly since.

"Don't worry about that!" said the doctor. "Almost everybody suffers more or less from it in

this country. It may be because they live more in the open air than they did at the East, or-if that isn't so-because of the constant winds which are blowing from the Gulf, or back to the Gulf, or at right angles to the line of this current and counter-current. I sometimes think that the Gulf is blamed too much as a factor in the production of our winds. The fact is that we are in a great open region, extending from the Gulf to the Arctic circle and from the Appalachian to the Rocky Mountains. There is nothing to prevent the winds from blowing, and they blow! And they bear an impalpable alkali dust. Their wings are covered with it. Then we are on the hem of the skirt of a desert which reaches to the Pacific Ocean. Through many months of the year our days are dry and hot, and our nights damp and cool. You may have noticed how a chill crawls over the prairies at sunset, and there comes a white vapor in all the depressions, ghostly enough to make one shudder when the moon shines brightly, which she always does when her position is such that she can. Everybody should go indoors as soon as evening begins to fall, or—if he is compelled to be out bundle himself with wraps—to neither of which self-protections anybody pays attention. So, is it any wonder that one meets so many people with husky voices?"

"Maybe, after all," said Emory, with a smile, "a change of climate would be good for me!"

The doctor smiled back, and said:

"No need o' that now! Avoid high winds as much as possible, stay in out o' the night, and raise a beard!"

At the last of these suggestions Emory laughed, saying:

"I'm rather prejudiced against a clergyman's having a beard!"

"Psha!" said the doctor. "The Roman Catholic priest here got a dispensation, at my suggestion, that nature might be allowed to have her way with regard to hair on his face!"

Emory laughed again, and said:

"At the East I was accused of having a tendency towards Rome because of my cleanly shaven face! Did I raise a beard here, I might be accused of the same tendency for the opposite reason! Someone would be sure to say that I had, at least, been influenced by the example of a Roman!"

"Well," growled the doctor, "if you are willing that your voice should be ruined by the cackle of old women in petticoats or trousers, I have nothing more to say!"

After having so expressed himself, he rose to a standing position, steadied himself with the lines, shaded his eyes with his free hand, and, when he

had looked to the southwest for a minute or so, said:

"I thought I'd be able to see it from here!"
"What?"

"The lone tree."

What was now the Avaway ranch, had been known from the first settlement of the Butternut Valley as The Lone Tree Claim, from the only tree at that time for miles about, which grows in the elbow of a little stream, known as Badger Creek, which runs across its southwest corner—the few roods of land in this elbow being marshy and the curving banks of the stream high, which had protected the shoot which had become a tree from the prairie fires, had it not been for which the whole region would have been covered with trees, as is manifest from the thriving of those which were planted by early settlers, which now dissect it in rows and dot it singly and in groves, as well as by those which have sprung up from accidental sowing, such as that of birds.

Emory was a transparent fellow.

At the lightening of his eyes, the doctor, without another word, cut across the prairies, and made directly for The Lone Tree Claim, was silent till it was reached, then pulled up, cranked a wheel, and when Emory had gotten out, drove on, without so much as saying good-bye.

Had the fact that he had had, soon after the arrival of the new rector of St. John, a young sister come on a visit to him anything to do with this?

Such an idea had not entered Emory's head

He gone, Emory approached the house.

There was immediate response to his knock.

From the fact that there was more earnestness than genuineness in the expressions of surprise which his advent brought forth, it may be inferred that unannounced visits from him were not unusual at The Lone Tree Claim.

But there were not many to be surprised to-day.

Mr. and Mrs. Avaway were in town, and the boys were away fifteen miles or so for the day at Silver Creek for a load of wood.

The only ones at home were Miss Martha and an old servant, whom Emory, in passing through the corral, had seen, through an open door, in the kitchen, ironing.

He would have been more than human had he regretted this.

Miss Martha asked him if he had had dinner.

He told her no—though it was then three o'clock in the afternoon; and explained that they had been between the homes of two of Doctor Gray's patients at the dinner hour.

"I am glad of it!" said Miss Martha. "It will give you a chance to see how good a cook I am!"

"You cook!" laughed Emory. "Anyone who can sing as well as you can oughtn't to be able to do anything else!"

"But I can!"—with a pretty blush. "Let me see!—what can I get for you? Do you like floating-island?"

Suppressing a smile at the absurdity of asking at that hour a robust young fellow, who had not had anything to eat since breakfast, and who since then had been riding in the most appetizing wind in the world—that which is not saying too much for the air of the Great American Desert, especially when it is moving violently, as it had been all the time that the doctor and Emory had been out, whoever has spent a day in it will testify—he said:

"Yes, if there isn't too much float and a good deal of island!"

"You didn't suppose that I proposed to give you nothing but floating-island, did you?" asked Miss Martha with an injured look.

"I am relieved!" sighed Emory.

The meal was an excellent one.

The body of it was flaky bread, sweet butter, boiled eggs—they must have been warm from the nest when put in the water—and luscious ham, which could not have been improved by boiling in champagne.

But there is no pot of ointment without its fly.

When he was taking his cigar, Miss Martha came to him with a flushed face, and asked:

"Why did you eat that floating-island?"

He laughed, with a brutality which was really a kindness:

"I didn't eat any more than politeness compelled! But don't feel bad! It would have been excellent hadn't the milk been sour!"

"I'm so sorry! But I got in the wrong pan!"

"It doesn't matter in the least! The substantials were what I cared for, and no living person could have cooked them better than you did—that is"—with a look of suspicion—"if you cooked them."

"You know I did!"

"How do I know? You may have been ironing while somebody else was cooking!"

"But I wasn't! And what you say doesn't worry me one bit! All that worries me is the failure of that floating-island!"

"That needn't worry you! My stomach isn't easily soured!"

At this they both laughed, and Miss Martha excused herself, saying:

"I must hurry and clear off the things!"

She returned in so incredibly short a time that Emory declared that instead of washing the dishes she must have "salted them down." At this she insisted that he should go to the kitchen with her.

He did so, and confessed that he was mistaken. "Though, of course," he added, "these may be other dishes!"

Thus the two spent the remainder of the afternoon in that delightful persiflage of which only two young people who are innocent, and love each other, and have not confessed it, are capable.

CHAPTER XIX.

A CHARGE ON BALDY.

Having let the reader into the secret of the state of Emory's mind with regard to Miss Martha, and that of the state of Miss Martha's mind with regard to Emory, I need not tell her—I might think differently were the reader whom I have imagined of the duller sex—that Emory—taking into the account his hoarseness—when dinner was over, the dishes washed, and his second cigar smoked, did not leave The Lone Tree Claim soon enough.

He remembered Doctor Gray's advice as to the advisability of his not being out after the sun went down; but he said to himself that he could, at least, keep warm, walking.

This, I fear, was only an excuse, however. I doubt if he would have left sooner had Baldy been awaiting him, saddled, and pawing with im-

patience in the corral, or so soon, had it not been that there was to be a Committee Meeting.

And who will blame him?

Certainly not the female reader.

The male reader may; but, if he does, it will be to disguise the fact that he would have tarried under the circumstances at any hazard.

For when are all earthly things so sublimated and fused in perfect happiness as when two young folk of opposite sex are in positive soul-accord?

As is natural for the male to do in such circumstances, Emory did most of the talking.

He spoke of what he had been told of the father whom he had never known, of the mother, of the school, college and university lives, of his wanderings and successes as a journalist, of his battles and why he had fought them.

Miss Martha's eyes were wide in hero-worship, when he told of how he had struck out, at home, for the girl who had no one else to take her part. He referred modestly to what he had done in literature, as well as to what he hoped to do.

He blushed in admitting that now and then he wrote poetry.

He stuttered in saying that, as he rode home with the Queen, in returning from his first visit to The Lone Tree Claim, as twilight deepened into night, as the stars began to appear, a poem had come to him. which he wrote out before he went to bed.

"Can you repeat it?" asked Miss Martha, in a low tone, with eyes downcast.

"No," said Emory. "I can never repeat anything from memory. But let me see! I may have a rough draft of it in my passbook!"

Taking the book from his pocket, he leafed it for a moment, then said:

"Yes; here it is!" and read:

"Just after the sun had retired him to rest,
To his gorgeously curtained couch in the west,
I saw, from some mysterious where,
A star appear in the upper air;
And the night-winds sighed, as they murmured:
'Alone!'

But they joyously laughed, clapped their hands in my face,

As another star came, and took by him her place; And together they're reigning, and greater by far, In union, than either could be as a star!"

The reading ended, he did not look up for a moment.

When he did, he caught the dark gray eyes of Miss Martha, as they left his face.

They were full of intelligence.

She was very pale.

He took her hand.

She did not draw it away.

But he dropped it; for the knob of a door turned.

Mrs. Avaway entered.

The very air would have revealed to anyone else how things stood; but she was the most unsuspicious person who has ever lived.

With an "Oh!"—indicating fatigue—she dropped into a chair, untying the strings of her bonnet.

Miss Martha said:

"Mr. Emberson, mother!"

As Emory came forward from the shade of the curtain in which he had been sitting, Mrs. Avaway emitted another: "Oh!"

Then Miss Martha:

"Thou'rt tired, mother! Where's father?"

"He let me out at The Tree, and went on some business with a neighbor."

Soon, making some remark about the necessity of preparing for supper, Miss Martha excused herself.

When she returned—as she did too soon to have made much preparation for anything—Emory, said:

"It's about time I were going!"

"Won't you stay for supper?" asked Mrs. Avaway.

"No, thank you; it's too short a time since I had a dinner of—floating-island!"

"That's real mean!" pouted Martha, and told her mother about Mr. Emberson's unexpected arrival after her dinner was concluded, and of the accident of her getting into the wrong can of milk.

When Mrs. Avaway had laughed a peculiar laugh, which was rather a cackle, in which there was not the slightest indication that she saw the funny side of what had been related to her, Emory rose, took his hat, and was about to go.

But she detained him, saying:

"The boys will soon be here, and I would like to have you become acquainted with them! They like you and your preaching. Before you came we had a great deal of trouble in getting them to go to church. They are forming new associations, and I would like to have them of the right kind!"

She thought it was this appeal to his professional responsibility which caused him to put down his hat and reseat himself.

I would not say that that appeal had not something to do with causing these actions, but I am disposed to think that a glance from Miss Martha had more effect in that direction.

That they pleased her was evident. She said:

"I, too, would like very much to have you and Henry and Stephen become acquainted!"

Was there in this desire more than sisterly solicitude?

What woman is there who does not want her men folk to know and like the man for whom she cares the most?

"But," she added—looking at Emory with an anxiety which caused his pulse to beat more quickly—he having said in the course of the afternoon a good deal about his hoarseness which was worrying him greatly—"ought you to be out in the night air?"

"It is so late now," he replied, "that I would be out in it somewhat did I start at once. Then it seems to me that it should not hurt me much, walking."

"Walking!" exclaimed Mrs. Avaway. "The boys will take you home! They'll be here by a little after sundown!"

"Thank you!" said Emory; "but were they here now I would have less reason for refusing to allow them to do so than I'll have later; for the doctor has warned me against the night air—which I am sure he would think more likely to injure me riding than afoot!"

So Emory stayed, met the boys in the corral when they drove in with their load of wood; ate more supper than he would have thought it possible for him to dispose of after so late and hearty a dinner—more than it would have been possible, under the circumstance, to compass in any other country; and, resisting the importunities of the boys that they be allowed to drive him home, started, an hour after sunset, to walk to Breeze-mead.

He was a good walker; but he did not walk rapidly that evening.

He had much to think—or to dream—about, as, his hands in his pockets, he moved slowly along the trail.

Excepting that the stars—which appeared to be much nearer than in any other sky into which he had ever looked—were shining brightly and multitudinously, the night was very dark.

He was so absent-minded that, in crossing a slough, he, in the dim starlight, mistook a puddle for a stone, stepped into it, and went up to his hip in black mud.

This dispelled his dreams—knocked all the sentimentality out of him.

What did he say when he reached firm ground?
—which he did at a step—one of the peculiarities
of a Southwestern slough being that it begins and

ends abruptly—one goes from its bank as immediately as your paper-weight falls from the edge of your table.

What did he say?

Only the stillness of the prairie heard, and it has never given up the secret.

But in a moment his attention was taken as suddenly from his wet foot and leg and ruined trousers as the puddle had taken it from his dreams.

A wagon driven furiously came rattling towards him, accompanied by the clatter of the feet of many more horses than were necessary to draw it.

"There must be a large company of mounted men with the wagon!" he thought as he stepped off the trail, and threw himself down in the tall prairie grass.

The land descended to the slough from both the east and the west.

The wagon and its escort were approaching from the latter direction—the driver and the riders dimly silhouetted against the dark, starry sky.

He could not be exactly certain—and he had not much time for deliberation, for it did not take them long, at the rate at which they were moving, to descend below the horizon—but he thought he recognized the Reverend Mr. Mc-Whorton on the wagon seat.

And it seemed to him that one of the riders looked like Editor Walker.

They acted like retreating raiders—a class of warriors with which he—from what he had seen, when a small boy, of the Civil War—was familiar.

They had been successful in some foray.

Half a dozen of the horses bore two men each—the hinder bound and secured to the one in front.

What was in the wagon?

He would have given a good deal to know; but he thought he could guess.

As the company approached—the horsemen spreading out considerably—he crawled off farther in the grass—in the fear that he might be ridden upon, and discovered, if not injured.

As the wagon neared the ford it slowed up.

The escort, of course, did the same.

This gave him a chance to hear the remarks which were dropped.

One said:

"The night was well chosen. Were it stormy they would have been on their guard."

Said another:

"Walker, you are a good un'! Had the rest of us had our way we couldn't 've succeeded any better. And it seems to me that it was a mighty bright idea of yours—that of goin' early in the evenin'! They might have been lookin' for us in the night or towards mornin'. But who would expect the enemy to come on him when the twilight was not much more than gone!"

Another laughed:

"They hadn't yet taken their posts! They were standin' together! We would have had no less trouble in taking them had they been so many sheep!"

Another remarked:

"The safes were heavier than I thought they'd be!"

"But come, men, hurry on! I know the men back of us! They'll be after us like a pack of devils before long!" said a voice which the listener knew to be that of Editor Walker.

Once across the ford they moved on as furiously as ever.

Waiting for the rearguard of two to be passed, Emory sought the trail, and made for Breezemead at top speed.

The slough was not more than a quarter of a mile east of The Twins—not more than three-quarters of a mile from the court house.

His objective point was the Adnogal House.

As he rushed by the former, though it was

lighted as usual, he saw no one about it, and no sound came from it.

Was it his knowledge of the descent which had been made upon it that made it appear so deserted?

Near the Adnogal House he came to a walk.

He quietly entered, passed up the stairway unnoticed, and went immediately to the Committee Room.

To his knocking in a certain way, the door of this room opened.

As he entered, Mr. Bynson, with his most mechanical smile, was saying something about the advisability of increasing the guard over the county records.

Emory said quietly:

"Right! Lock the stable door with care—doubly lock it—after the horse is stolen!"

Everybody looked at him, saw his wet, muddy, disheveled and blown condition, felt that he had something to say, and waited anxiously.

When he had spoken a few words, the Committee dispersed without adjournment, with the understanding that they were to meet as soon as they could mount, at the court house—to be there in ten minutes—with as many others as they could bring.

Nobody would be waited for.

As he sprang down the stairway with Squire Riley, he asked:

"Can I have Baldy?"

"Nobody else wants the black devil!" responded the Squire—on whom the joke had been going about for some days that, seeing how tractable Baldy was to Emory, he had mounted him—to be run away with and unseated. "But you must saddle him yourself! It takes three men to do it, and they can't be spared now! They must be saddling horses for themselves!"

The ten minutes up, a company of fifty horsemen were flying through the darkness to the eastward—Emory at their head—Baldy snorting, and sending the trail behind him as if the Squire had rightly named him.

There is one thing upon which the Western man, prides himself more than upon his "gun" or his "deal," and that is his horse.

And the ranchman or the clerk in that region is better mounted than is the millionaire at the East taking his outing in the park—better mounted for his purpose.

The millionaire's horse cost more, but it has not the bottom of that of the most meanly mounted Westerner.

Emory was ahead for two reasons.

In the first place, the information which he had

brought being the cause of the expedition, he was tacitly the leader, and no one would have any more thought of dissenting from his leadership than if the company at the head of which he rode had been a troop of regular cavalry and he the ranking officer, and had anyone dissented, the revolvers of all others could have been counted upon to bring him to his senses.

And, in the second place, there was no horse in the new Southwest of which Baldy would not have been ahead in a race.

And this was a race—a race for the county seatship—for the material prosperity of Breezemead —for its honor—a race to overtake the Centrevillians—a race of every horseman with every other horseman and with the company.

There was but one superior mount.

So the company kept well bunched behind its leader.

I doubt if there is a horseman, or a horse, anywhere out of the West, who could stand for thirty minutes the killing pace at which the company went—each man riding with a loose rein; for the trail could not be seen in the darkness and the horse had to be trusted.

Because of the wagon, heavily laden with the purloined safes, the Centrevillians could not, of course, travel as rapidly as the Breezemeadians,

but, considering their impediment, they were making wonderfully good time.

As Centreville was approached, their pursuers began to despair of overtaking them.

Emory was far enough in advance to be not deafened by the pounding of the feet of his company's horses, and caught the rattle of the retreating wagon, the driver's voice in urging on his team, and the commands of the raider's leader.

At length he heard:

"Halt!"

The wagon kept on.

As he had been out most of the time since the sun went down, his eyes were not unaccustomed to the darkness; so he soon saw—what he probably otherwise would have been unable to see—at about a hundred yards ahead, a line of horsemen across the trail.

The opposing leader had evidently determined to make a stand and cover the retreat of the wagon.

It would not do to be stopped then!

So Emory spoke to Baldy, and pulled gently on his reins.

Baldy understood, and slackened his pace.

When Hugh and Dick and Doctor Gray were abreast of him—the rest of the Vigilantes were to the rear—Mr. Bynson and Mr. Nothym, for in-

stance, being, by nature, fitted rather for council than for action—Emory cried:

"The spurs!—charge!"

If Baldy, the first time Emory mounted him, darted from the stable door as a stone from a catapult, he now shot ahead as a ball from a cannon.

Emory leaned forward with a rather unclerical yell.

And it was fortunate that he did so; else our history would have to stop right here; for a ball which went through the brim of his hat at the rear would have gone through his head had he sat upright in his saddle.

Other balls zipped about him.

But in a second he was through the line—one horse and rider having gone over from Baldy's impact, and a saddle having been emptied by the touch of the butt of Emory's revolver on the forehead of the one who had occupied it.

Glancing back, he saw that Hugh and Dick had each felled his man and that Doctor Gray was in close fight with another with good prospect of mastering him.

Everybody seemed to be governed by the spirit of these four—disposed to win but to not unnecessarily take life.

The Western man of that time was a great boy.

He loved horse-play—he was passionately fond of a fight—but he would a little rather not kill another, if he could help it just as well as not.

The glance back showed that the Centrevillians were completely broken.

Those who could were making off under the cover of the darkness, some still mounted, most afoot.

Emory then turned his attention to the wagon. It had gotten a considerable distance away.

The driver was standing up and whipping his horses to the utmost possible speed.

Dashing after him, Emory soon overtook him. He yielded at once, saying:

"I'm no hog! I know when I've got enough!"
"Very well!" with a laugh. "Hands up!"

"Can't; I'm drivin'!"

"Whoa!" The team was glad enough to come to a stop. "Now, up with your hands!"

The driver obeyed.

Emory disarmed him, and said:

"Turn your team about!"

This he did reluctantly, and the return trip to Breezemead was begun.

When those of the Centrevillians who had not

escaped in the darkness were disarmed, they were allowed to go.

This was as true of the driver as of anybody else—the lines being taken from him by a Breezemeadian whose horse had been disabled in the mêlée.

The return was slow; by the time the safes were replaced in the court house it was long after midnight.

Even the roughest of the rough-riders who had galloped after Emory was glad enough to go home.

As to Emory himself, the excitement had absorbed him. It was not till he got to his room that, from the time he started on the run from the ford, he was aware of the miry and soaked state of his right foot and leg to the hip.

CHAPTER XX.

THE DESTRUCTION OF A NOTE.

HE was restless after retiring.

He rose early.

His bath did not invigorate him; fresh underwear irritated him; the cup of coffee, for which he descended to the dining-room—a cup of anything had, up to then, never been served in his room to a guest who was not known to be ill at the Adnogal House—did not taste good.

It would not have tasted good had it been the best cup of coffee that had ever been boiled—which it was not.

It was not only strong—being a Southerner, he liked strong coffee—it was rank.

A few grains of good coffee may have gotten beyond the Mississippi thirty years ago. If so, he never had any evidence of the occurrence.

The cup under attention nauseated him—which it is only fair to say, in the interest of its quality, a similar cup had never done before.

His head ached; there was a bad taste in his mouth; his throat was dry; he was cold and utterly miserable.

Upon returning to his room—which he did at once—he threw himself upon his bed.

A chill came on; the hours went by; the chill was followed by a burning fever.

He did not appear at dinner.

There was evidently not much thought of this. Still the Queen and her court missed him.

It may be I would better say they missed his wit and repartee.

For the West then was very different from the East, and, possibly, from the West of to-day—in that, in the cracking of jokes, nobody spared anybody, and nobody was ever angered by what anybody said, or—which may be nearer the truth—ever showed anger.

One had to be ready to take care of himself—with his revolver on occasion, with his tongue constantly.

It has been seen that there was need that he be quick with his "gun."

But this need was not always upon him as it was that he be quick with his tongue.

Emory's not appearing at supper caused comment and question.

The Queen was anxious.

She hunted up her father.

He had not seen the one who now had become, easily, his principal guest.

The clerk had not seen him.

The same was true of the hall-boy.

Nobody had seen him since his coming into the dining-room, just as the door opened for breakfast, and calling for the cup of coffee which he did not drink.

The chambermaid reported that she had not been able to get into his room to do it up.

Mr. Gurnsey went himself, opened his door with a pass-key, and found him unable to either rise or speak aloud.

Doctor Gray was sent for at once.

Two weeks later there was a knock at his door.

To this knock Doctor Gray—who was making the second of his three daily calls—responded.

When he opened, he received from the hall-boy a note for the invalid, who found it to be from the Queen and Miss Avaway.

They wanted to know when they might call.

He handed it to the doctor, who, having glanced at it, said:

"Now!"

Emory shook his head, put his hand to his chin and cheek, and whispered:

"Not till I've seen a barber!"

"Seen a barber!" said the doctor. "If you have a friend who is a barber, I have no objection to your seeing him; but if you have any thought of being shaven, you might as well understand now that that cannot be! When your voice returns—"

"Which it will have done-"

"In two months!" was the answer, accompanied by a most pronounced snicker, which would have caused Emory to think that his misfortune was highly enjoyed, had he not by this time come to know the snickerer pretty well, and to understand that it was rather idiosyncratic than indicative of character—that, at most, it indicated not more enjoyment of a patient's suffering than was necessary to steadiness and resolution in rendering relief.

"Am I to spend two months in this miserable, stuffy, little room?" asked the sick man, petulantly, in a hoarse whisper.

"There!" said the doctor, severely, but raising his eyebrows, to show that he was not angry, but thoughtful of the patient's interest. "How often must I tell you to not try to use your voice! I have said nothing about your staying in this room for two months, have I?"

Emory shook his head.

With his most pronounced snicker—this seemed

to be his only way of laughing—the doctor continued:

"I think that what you need is a change of climate!"

To Emory's look of disappointment, he said:

"I don't mean a permanent change!"

"And I can't afford any other sort!" whispered Emory—without fear of a reprimand; for the doctor did not object to his whispering—so long as he did not bring the vocal cords into play.

"But we can! Breezemead owes you a good deal; and we are disposed to pay something on account!"

At this, the doctor placed a fat purse in Emory's hand, and went on:

"You are to go off, and not return till every cent of that is spent! And you can't spend it in less than ten or twelve weeks—unless you indulge in some rather unclerical pleasures—which wouldn't be good for your voice! I give you the purse on two conditions—that you spend its contents, and that you do not shave till you get back! Then you'll find that reasonable exposure and a little alkali dust will not hurt you, and won't want to shave! Good-bye!"

And he was off—turning, as he passed through the door, to say:

"I'll send the young ladies right up!"

When they entered they found Emory where the doctor had left him—in an easy-chair, wrapped in blankets.

They had evidently been warned against making the patient talk, for, as they entered, the Queen said:

"You're not to say a word! We're to do all the talking!" and began rattling away about Dollie and Baldy.

Concerning the latter she said:

"You must soon get out in pity for him! His ankles are swelling from standing in the stall. His temper is growing worse and worse. He was never known to buck till you were housed up. That he now does, and lies down, and rolls over, and falls backwards—has every bad trick that horse was ever known to have. He has certainly recognized you as master, and will have nothing to do with any other man, but to hurt him!"

The horseman who would have been so sorry for those who had been hurt as to not laugh with pleasure at this tribute to his skill and magnetism, as well as to his horse's intelligence and faithfulness, would have been more of a Christian than Emory.

As the Queen rattled on, about horses, about the court, about the church, about whatever happened

to pop into her little head, Miss Avaway smiled and said nothing.

But there was power in her silence. There was a world of woman in her. A sweet thrill went through Emory every time he caught her eye.

He whispered that he was sorry that he had not an instrument in the room, that he might ask her to sing—at which they all laughed, for the room was not much larger than a good-sized piano.

The Queen said:

"That doesn't matter! She is independent of instruments! I like her unaccompanied singing the better!"

"What shall I sing?" asked the subject of the compliment—in a tone which showed that she saw that she would have to sing something, and was feeling that the sooner she got at it the sooner it would be over.

" 'Under the Daisies,' " suggested the Queen.

"No!" whispered Emory, "that would be too suggestive in my present condition!"

When the rather constrained titter which this remark brought from the young ladies was ended, Miss Avaway sang "Warrior Bold," so exquisitely, so intelligently, with such an appreciation of the martial spirit, and with such an avoidance of Emory's eyes that he could not but wonder wheth-

er it was intended as a compliment to his recent exploit Centerville way.

What talking upon the part of the Queen, or what singing upon the part of Miss Avaway might have followed I do not know; what I do know is that at this point the door opened abruptly, that Doctor Gray entered, and that he said—though with a raising rather than with a lowering of his eyebrows:

"Young ladies, didn't I tell you that you mustn't stay too long!"

"Have we?" asked the Queen.

"You've been here more than an hour!"

"And do you call that too long?"

"I've heard of young ladies liking a young clergyman well enough to eat him; heard of 'em often; but they generally prefer him alive!"

"You horrid creature!"

"Out o' here!"

And out they went, to the accompaniment of a snicker. . . .

When, a week later, the Whackston stage left the Adnogal House, Emory was a passenger.

The King of the road was on the box, of course; but, much to his grief, Emory did not sit beside him.

The convalescent was not yet strong enough for that.

He made the trip within, on the back seat, cushions under and about him, enswathed in all sorts of wraps.

Before the King mounted the box, he gave, to the chagrin of the Queen and Miss Avaway, the last touches to his charge's comfort, saying:

"I hope you'll be able to take your old place on the return trip!"

Emory thanked him, and settled his mind—the only thing that he found it necessary to do for himself—to the long ride.

The stage was two hours late at Whackston.

When asked why, the King replied, with a wink at Emory, whom he was aiding out of his impedimenta:

"The nigh wheeler busted a hame-string, the off leader cast a shoe, I broke a doubletree, and lost a tire!"—four falsehoods in one breath, which was not a long one, perfectly calm, and followed by another quite as natural.

The truth was that he lost the two hours in driving slowly in Emory's interest—whose mother would not have known him.

He was greatly emaciated.

Then there was his three weeks' growth of beard.

And he was changed to the ear as well as to the eye.

Though his voice was somewhat returned, it had not recovered its hearty, cheery, good-natured timbre.

Its rich, light baritone, in speech and laughter, which once heard was never forgotten, of which, where he was known, or on returning where he was acquainted, he was rather lavish, was not heard.

The King of the road usually paid no more attention to those whom he conveyed than does a pilot to the passengers of the ship which he steers, or any other king to his subjects; but this evening, when he rounded up to the Houston House, he leaped from the box, and preceded the landlord to the stage door, and astonished him, as well as the bystanders, by opening it with his own hands.

By the time his excuses for his tardiness were fully taken in, he had fairly carried his charge to the veranda, who, when he had made sure of his perpendicularity, smiled his thanks.

Now, it was just as true of Emory's smile as of his tone that it could not be forgotten.

The landlord exclaimed:

"Well, Mr. Emberson, glad to see you again! Didn't know you at first! Allow me to take your arm! Come right in! Have your eyes about you, boys! Be smart! Come, Jim! Have some-

one drive around to the barns for you! Your whistle must need a wetting!"

The King hadn't the slightest objection to a drink, or to another. He was a true Westerner in the regard of the amount of tarantula-juice he could carry; but he would not have foregone the pleasure of driving his team under cover, and seeing them unhooked, rubbed down, and properly stalled, for a barrel of that fluid, or a keg of gold. He was a true horseman. He loved a horse. As related in an early chapter of this history, he held that "horses are persons."

But his horses cared for, he sauntered towards the Houston House.

On the way he met a character with whom the reader is not entirely unacquainted—no less a person than Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cowskin.

Their greeting was no less hearty than it was profane.

"Have a drink!" said Tom.

"On my way to the Houston to get one! Join me!"

They were old acquaintances, and had a mutual, rough, buffalo-like affection, as such men—having roughed it together, faced dangers in company, and not "layin' for each other"—are apt to have.

As they walked—or waddled—Tom asked:

"Do you ever see that hell-on-the-trigger young preacher at Breezemead?"

"Emberson? See him often! He's a good un'!"

"I'd say so! He's greased lightnin'! When you see him again give him my kindest!"

"Why don't you do it yourself?"

"Can't afford the time to go so far!"

"He's here!"

"Now?"

"How in —— could he be here without being here now?"

"Where?"

"At the Houston House!"

"The — you say!"

"Yes!"

"I'm blankety-blank-blanked if I wouldn't like to see him!"

"Come along, then!"

On leaving the stage Emory had gone immediately to his room, asking that his supper be sent up to him—a request for which there was enough reason in his physical condition, of which there was ample indication in his appearance.

The room reached, he had thrown himself on the bed with which it was provided.

After some time, there was a knock at the door.

Thinking it was the waiter with his supper, he said carelessly:

"Come in!"

To his surprise, in walked the two men whom we but now left on their way to see him.

He started up, and involuntarily reached for his revolver—or darted his hand to his hip-pocket, where his revolver would have been had he had it with him, as he had not; for he was not only by profession a man of peace, but by disposition—believing in war only when it could not be honorably avoided.

Seeing the action, the King said:

"There! His being with me is proof that he means no harm!"

Tom laughed, and said:

"Another proof is that I haven't my revolver in my hand! I"—still laughing—"have had enough experience with you, Mr. Emberson, to know that the man who succeeds in harming you must have a sure drop on you, and"—laughing more vigorously—"keep it carefully! You are not the sort of a man to be scared at a revolver in a fellow's pocket!"

Emory invited his visitors to be seated.

When they had taken chairs, and he had put them at their ease, by throwing his cigarcase to the King, requesting that he and his friend should help themselves, a conversation began, a very little of which is important to this history.

Suddenly changing the subject, from a comparison of the soil and the grasses of the valley of the Cowskin Creek, on which his ranch was situated, with those of the valleys of the Quicksand and the Butternut Rivers, Tom asked:

"Mr. Emberson, I beg your pardon, but may I ask how you, an Eastern man, come to be so familiar with the revolver?"

"In the first place," was the reply, with a smile, "I'm a Southern man!"

"Oh!"

"Then nature must have done something for me. And I rather believe in one's taking care of himself, when there is the emergency of the necessity—something which he cannot very well do without having learned how! There are two things with which one may be attacked in America—the fist and the revolver. The latter is the one in question now. Seeing others using it, I went to work and mastered it. That is all there is of it!"

"That's enough; for you certainly know how to handle it!"

Emory bowed, and asked:

"How did you come to attempt to make me drink vinegar and eat salt and pepper?"

Crossing his legs and grinning, Tom replied:

"Simply because I saw that you were a tender-foot!"

"How did you come to leave the way open for me to reverse the situation with regard to the drop?"

"I didn't know that I was leaving the way open! I might have been a little more on my guard with a Western man. But I doubt it! I don't believe there is another man living quick enough to snatch my 'gun'! I didn't see your hand move! I didn't know anything till you had it and me! My pride was hurt. That I admit. Whose wouldn't 'a' been? But that is all past! I have no hard feelings now! Shake!"

When the symbolism of the "dead past's having buried its dead," for which the bad-man had risen and approached Emory, was over, and he was returning to his seat, he added:

"And if you are ever in need of a man slower than yourself call on Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cowskin!"

Immediately after this Emory's supper came, and his visitors took their departure; but not till he had scribbled a note on a leaf, torn it from his pass-book, and handed it to the King, with the request that he hand it to the landlord.

It was an order for supper and—whatever else they might call for—for the two—a note for which he took the precaution to ask, when he settled his bill, and which he destroyed.

APTER XXI.

KIDNAPPED.

BEFORE daylight the next morning, Emory had left Whackston by train.

Where he went is not material to this history.

Suffice it to say that eight weeks later a letter from Hugh Charles reached him at an hotel on the Atlantic seaboard.

The letter was long.

It had much to say about "my prairie chicken" and "your chicken of the same species;" in the midst of a rather involved sentence was this clause: "I am bothered to death by inquiries as to the condition of your health;" it touched upon church affairs; but the portions which most interested Emory were the following:

"It transpires that the man whom you so gently touched with the butt of your revolver was Editor Walker. I say, gently; but you must have given him a pretty good lick, as, as a result of it, he

was confined to his bed for more than a month. During that time the Centrevillians moved not, neither did they peep. But now they are both peeping and moving with a vengeance. We are disposed to regret that you did not hit the editor a little harder—a regret with which we have no thought that you are regenerate, unregenerate, or degenerate enough to sympathize. In the language of Dick Erskine-chaste and classical as Western language, especially that of this same Erskine, is apt to be: '--- the preachers!' But that will do no good—in the case of such a preacher as you are! The condemnation might react on the head of the condemner. That would be the only possible result. You are so aggressive by nature, and on Christian principle, that you cannot be kept out of where you want to enter-as we Vigilantes discovered. This leads me to remark that we had a meeting last night. We regretted that you were absent in person, and not present in your prayers, as Brother Gurnsey would say, which you could not well be as you did not know that we were meeting. But your influence was there. I will tell you how. You may remember that the time of the election, at which the Crowley County voters are again to express themselves as to the location of the county seat, is nigh at hand -only some six weeks off. Up to within a week,

we thought that everything was going our way. But the devil is abroad again in the person of Editor Walker. We decided last night that disposition must be made of him. The question of how to dispose of him arose. I called attention to the fact that that question had already been up, and decided. 'But the preacher isn't here now!' said Dick, with one of those sardonic smiles of his, and diabolical modifications. That goatee of his standing up like the tail of a pointer-pup, Mr. Nothym said: 'But he'll be back!'—an observation which caused Doctor Gray to laugh that laugh in which there must be a contortion of the palate, Mr. Bynson to smile automatically, Mr. Gurnsey to look pious, and Erskine to say, 'Yes; that's the - of it!' The result was that we resolved to stock a retired place—a place well known to every one of the committee, excepting yourself-with eatables, drinkables and smokables; and employ certain faithful, if not over-righteous individuals -faithful for a consideration-to capture and convey there the gentleman in mind. The negotiations with the agents, and the getting of the victim in their power—though the matter being in the hands of Erskine and myself (ahem!) there will be no time lost-will take something over a week. . . Your letters have come promptly. We are glad to learn of your returning health and

vigor-all of us-including the Queen and Miss Avaway. I ought to be thankful to you for being born my cousin. The young ladies were kind to me before your coming. Since your temporary going away they overwhelm me with attentions. Allow me to congratulate you on your finding Miss Avaway, and on her-she has not made a confidant of me-having found you. There is much in that young lady, I can tell you! The other evening you were the subject of conversation, as the preacher—you see that I have adopted the terminology of the people among whom I find myself—is apt to be. The party did not know that I was within hearing. Some one remarked: 'He's a queer fellow!' The Queen tittered; but Miss Avaway—in a tone which made me feel like — but I didn't! — said: 'Yes; the man who is both a preacher and a man is queer!' I tell you, Em, the stuff's in that girl! She'll stand by you through thick and thin! Your being away would be dangerous for your interests in the direction of her, were I not so confoundly slow in making up my mind and in expressing myself, were I a little more attractive in personal appearance, and had I not a prairie chicken already who is good enough for me! . . . I enclose a letter which has been thought to be for you."

This enclosed letter was addressed to:

"THE REVEREND EMBRY EMBERSON."

There is no possibility of giving an idea of it in type.

And did I employ an engraver the reader who stopped to decipher it would be stopped for good.

It was from Red Thompson.

As nearly as the recipient could make out, the writer was suffering from a severe attack of the Western fever, that he did not dare to speak of it to his father or mother, and that he could not wait till he heard from the one whom he addressed before he started.

As Emory would have been delighted to have Red with him anywhere, he regretted that this letter had not reached him before he left Breezemead.

He would have answered it at once had there not been a reason why there was no need that he do so.

But the reference to Miss Avaway, and the news of what was about to happen to Editor Walker, in Hugh's letter, came to his mind again, and, for the moment, drove Red, and everybody and everything else from it.

He went to the office and asked when he could get a train to the West.

He was soon off.

Glancing at him, as he sits in the smoking-compartment of the sleeper, we are pleased to see that he is robust again; but we cannot restrain a smile.

Why?

Because of his full beard.

It is not a very beautiful beard.

It is yellow on the chin, auburn, if not red, on the cheeks and upper lip, and dark-brown in front of the ears.

In general effect, it is sandy.

It is somewhat patchy.

The sides of the lower lip are almost bare.

It is trimmed to a point, in the Sir Walter Raleigh style.

Was there ever a man who did not fondle a new beard?

If so, Emory was not that man.

Glancing into one of the mirrors with which such a compartment is always adorned, a questioning look came to his face, his head inclined, the left hand, which was doing the fondling, stopped that operation, left the beard, and, the three others resting on the left cheekbone, the index finger scratched the outer angle of the left eye.

Both of his eyes were squinted. There was a question in his mind: "Of whom do I remind myself?"

For a time he could not conclude.

Then his head went back in a laugh.

Under the circumstances it was rather amusing.

It was, also, rather startling.

No wonder he smote his right thigh with his right palm, or that his right foot went into the air!

He reminded himself of—of all men in the world—Editor Walker!

When the train approached—no matter what city—he began to question whether he was acting properly.

He would have gone to his mother directly on leaving Breezemead had it not been that he did not care to have her see him in his emaciated condition.

He now questioned if it would be right to return to Breezemead without seeing her.

Before the train pulled into the station, he had arranged with the train-conductor for a forty-eight hours' "lay-over," and took the next express South.

Of this detour there are two important facts which are of interest to this history; his mother thought his beard to be not absolutely unbecoming, and a few weeks before the mountains had ceased to hold Red Thompson.

Four or five days later, he was on the box with the King.

In the midst of a talk about horses he had asked for news of Baldy.

"Gone!"

"Where?"

"They couldn't do anything with him, and turned him out to pasture!"

"I was afraid he might be dead, strayed, or stolen!"

"He may be by this time!"

"Which?"

"Either or all!" answered the King; then—looking his companion in the face, suddenly—added, abruptly: "I've got it!"

"What?"

"Of whom you have been reminding me!"

"Whom?"

"Why, that blankety-blank-blanked Butternut City editor. What's his name? Walker! And blank-blank him, he ought to be made strike a lively walk out of the country! And, blank me, if I think it would matter a blank-blanked sight if he were walked farther!"

"Why, what has he done to you?"

"Nothing! Wish he might! I'd like to have an excuse for settling him! But he's done enough against Breezemead, the best blanked town in the Butternut Valley!"

"The Butternut City people wouldn't admit that!"

"No!—the sand-hill cranes! Ever been in Butternut City?"

"No."

"Well, you just ought to go down there once! You'd need to take your grub with you! It is built on sand hills that move every time the wind changes. A killdeer has to carry a knapsack over the blasted country! A county like Crowley would never think of building her capital on the shifting sands! 'Great would be the fall of it!' if that's good Scripture. You know more about Scripture than I do! But there are some things about which I know as much as anybody can. And one o' them's Butternut City! With her site she would have no show for the county seat were she located as well as Breezemead, which is located a great sight better than Centreville, though Centreville may be at the geographical centre of the county. This Centreville is built on a rock, it is true, but only goats can get there!"

This caused Emory to laugh; for he had been at Centreville, and knew it to be a city "beautiful for situation."

As the King had said, it is "built on a rock."

It is also true that this rock is somewhat elevated.

But it is not true that "only a goat can get there."

The ascent of this "rock" from the north, west and south is so gradual that it is hardly noticeable, while from the east it is not overly difficult.

The King proceeded:

"Centreville wouldn't have a ghost of a chance in the coming election were it not for the help it is receiving from Butternut City—which throws sand in the eyes of the voters in the eastern and northeastern parts of the county—and God knows she has enough of it to throw!"

I have said that the Western man is a great boy in war.

He is no less a boy in peace.

He claims everything for anything in which he is interested.

It is the greatest thing on earth.

Indeed, its perfections are more than earthly.

On the other hand, he admits nothing to the advantage of the man, woman, place, or thing who, or which, comes into competition with the man, woman, place, or thing who, or which, for any reason, has his allegiance.

His, her, or its imperfections are more than earthly.

Having given Emory time to think this, the King went on:

"And Butternut City would amount to little in this fight were it not for that —— Editor Walker!"

At this, he gathered up his lines, spoke to his horses rather sharply, and would have struck with his whip had he been mean enough to mete on one, or more of them his spite at another.

"But!" he continued, "I guess the Breezemead Vigilantes will take care of him!"—a remark to which there was no reply; and, of course, he had no idea that his companion knew more about the purposes of the Breezemead Vigilantes than he did.

The day was delightful, and Emory enjoyed to the full the ride with so piquant a seat-mate.

In the course of the day nothing of importance occurred, excepting that, in the second relay, one of the horses flinched, and was discovered to have a galled shoulder.

But this is quite worthy of note, from the fact that, because of the slower driving which it, in conjunction with the King's tenderness of heart, caused, they were some miles from Breezemead when night fell.

The gall made the King moody—as moody as

is the political king when something goes wrong with a servant in state or army.

Emory was moody, too.

He thought a little of Editor Walker, and of the experience which was about to overtake him, if it was not already upon him; more of Breezemead, and whether she would lose the county seat; still more of the church of which he was rector, in the chancel of which he had not been for a dozen weeks; but most of Miss Avaway.

Finally he thought only of her.

The desire to see her became very strong within him—increased in strength, till he could no longer govern it—which may have come somewhat of the fact that he could see no good reason why it should be governed.

The night was clear, but so dark that he could but dimly see the King.

He asked:

"How far are we from town?"

"We've just struck the outskirts!" was the morose reply.

"Pull up!"

The King did so, wondering what on earth, in the way of danger or obstruction, could have missed his eyes, and been seen by a pair inexperienced.

Saying: "My trunk and traveling-bag are new.

Nobody at the Adnogal will know them. Don't tell anybody whose they are. Simply say they'll be called for!" Emory leaped to the ground, and disappeared in the darkness.

Now Hugh Charles boarded at the south of the town, while the trail from Whackston—swinging to the south, to reach a ford on the Butternut—entered from the southwest.

Hugh had a pony—named Pumpkins, from his resemblance to the thoroughly ripe product of a certain robust vine—which he kept in a stable back of his boarding-house.

Emory's project was to get Pumpkins, and make at once for The Lone Tree Claim.

He calculated that Hugh would have had his supper and be away by that time.

So he would not run the risk, in all probability, of being recognized by his relative.

Should Hugh be at home, there would be nothing for it but to confide in him.

Should he not be at home, would the landlady allow his property to be taken by one whom she did not know?

Probably; for Hugh was in the habit of sending strangers for him—friends or confederates.

Emory counted, with absolute confidence, upon his beard as sufficient disguise so far as the landlady was concerned, from the fact that she was a Presbyterian.

He did not know that she had ever seen him, excepting at matins on his first Sunday at Breezemead, when, he had learned through Hugh, her curiosity had overcome the prejudices and she had been to hear the new preacher—"meenister," by the way, according to Hugh, having dropped from her vocabulary as thoroughly as had minister, or clergyman, or priest from that of anyone coming from another part of the world.

As he hurried along, he trembled with excitement, in anticipation of the opening of a door by someone, thinking that he would not spare Pumpkins.

Anticipation of this pleasure within the hour absorbed him.

He had to cross Main Street, which passes north and south.

This he did hurriedly.

But he had a sense that he was noticed by a couple of rough looking men, who were lurking under an awning, not far from the southeast corner.

Having no suspicion of danger, and feeling assured, as has, possibly, been more than sufficiently

intimate, that his beard would prevent him from being recognized, this gave him no uneasiness.

He paid no attention to the two men's darting into a space between the building with the awning and the at south.

They had had, in the dim light of the street, opportunity to have a fairly good view of him.

As he, hurrying eastward, passed the southeast corner, he had an impression of being watched from the mouth of the aperture between the buildings.

He should have been on his guard in approaching the next alley.

But he was not.

Can any practical thing be expected from a man in his then state of mind?

Exactly what happened at the mouth of that alley, when he had sufficiently recovered, and had time to think about it, he did not know.

He felt the shock of a blow back of his right ear.

He would have fallen had he not been caught by either arm.

Then his hands were pinioned, a gag was slipped into his mouth, and a bag was dropped over his head.

Thus effectually silenced and blinded, he was led away.

A few minutes later there was a halt, the bag was raised from his head, the gag was removed from his mouth, the bag was replaced, he was lifted from the ground, and was astride a horse.

From the voices about him he concluded that he was in the charge of a company of something like twenty mounted men.

Soon the company started—he in its midst, his horse led—and rode rapidly away—in what direction he could not tell.

At first it was terrifying to him to be riding at such a rate—the horses went at top speed—his hands tied behind him.

But he soon realized that his horse was surefooted, and his mind quieted enough for questions to begin to rise as to why he should have been kidnapped.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STRANGE VALLEY.

HE found riding with his hands tied behind him very painful to the body, and not holding the reins, and so having no control of the horse, very trying to the mind.

For a considerable time his pride prevented him from seeking relief.

But that was foolish.

· He finally asked:

"Why not tie my hands before me?"

His voice was so muffled by the bag that it was thoroughly disguised.

There being no response to his question, he thought it might not have been heard, and repeated it more loudly.

A voice near him said:

"Silence! or you'll be regagged!"

"I'm in your power," he replied. "You can, of course, make me keep quiet. But are you savages? Or are you afraid of me?"

"We're afraid of nothing!"

"Then why not loosen my hands? You needn't give me the reins! I can't get away from you! You have me, and I have sense enough to know it!"

"Keep quiet!" was the stern reply; but he thought he caught an inflection of good-nature in it.

He, also, thought he heard a sibilation.

Had something been whispered to him, which the motion, the wind, and the bag had prevented him from hearing?

Had he a friend among his captors?

Or was there one among them more kindly and humane than the rest?

After something like two hours' riding, there was a halt made in a stream—the water of which, he concluded from the plashing, must have come to about the horses' knees.

When they had enough to drink, and the other bank was reached, as the company was retaking its loose formation, he was aware of a discussion.

At length a rough voice, which it seemed to him he had heard before, said:

"All right! But be careful! His escape would lose us a pretty penny!"

Immediately two of the riders dismounted, assisted him to do the same, unbound his hands, and

retied them—before him, and aided him in remounting.

This done, the company rode on, at the same rapid pace at which they had approached the stream.

The relief which this change in the position of his hands brought him was very great.

He now began questioning in what direction they were moving.

The Southwest is not very well watered. It partakes too much of the character of the desert for that. What streams there are are not wide or deep. Most of them partake of the character of swales rather than streams. They are raging torrents at the time of heavy rains, dry as the rest of the prairie in the time of drought, during the most of the year having not more than occasional puddles, which are often not more than damp places.

As he had neither heard of recent heavy rains, or noticed any indication of them during his so recent ride in the open with the King, he concluded that the ford which had just been crossed must be upon one of the well-known, considerable streams of the region.

He remembered that at such a ford—his horse had fairly slidden into and scrambled out of it

—the King was in the habit of giving his six-in-hand a chance to slake its thirst.

He remembered, also, that all day long the wind had blown in his and the King's faces, as they moved south, and that from that direction are the prevailing winds of the Southwest.

They seem to love to come from the south.

They will blow from there for weeks together, and were never known to change to any other direction in less than three days.

Now, ever since this, by him unchosen, ride had begun, the wind had been blowing the bag into the nape of his neck, getting in from below and causing it to belly out in front of him like a sail, which was unfortunate; for when a swaying of the horse, or an overfilling, emptied the bag, he was nearly smothered.

Putting the suggestion of the water and that of the wind together, he concluded that he was being conveyed due north.

This direction was kept long after crossisng the ford.

Finally there was an abrupt turning to the left, causing the bag to belly over his right shoulder, and tickle his left cheek and nose almost unendurably.

This direction was not pursued long, however. When a bridge had been thundered over, the belly of the bag was no longer over his right shoulder, but diagonally in front of his right breast.

This indicated that the course was changed to the northwest.

He remembered that there was but one stream in the region wide enough to necessitate so long a bridge as that which had been crossed—the Quicksand, and that, so far as he had seen or heard, there was no bridge on it save at Whackston.

So he had retraced at night, on horseback, the way he had gone over, the previous day, by stage, and was being hurried along a trail northwest of Whackston-into a wild, desert region, which he had not penetrated, but of which he had heard much—the last feeding-ground of the buffalo, which, to the disgrace of civilized man, revealing his thirst for blood and gain, was nearly gone thirty years ago-and the home of the worst classes of the West-desperadoes, stage and train robbers, cattle and horse thieves-enemies of even the rude civilization of the border—the men who gave excuse for the Vigilantes, almost justified the crude justice, the symbol of which is not the balances but the noose, which was somewhat more likely to punish wrongly than rightly.

After a time he came to see the gray whiteness of the bag which covered his head and torso.

Soon he saw it more distinctly.

That this bag had held something before it had been appropriated as a cap for him he had known from the amount of sneezing he had been doing from soon after it was slipped over his head.

And he had not much more than sneezed when his palate told him that that something had been cornmeal.

He now noticed that the bag was branded.

Could he make the brand out?

It might give him the key to the situation; reveal to him in whose hands he had fallen; be used sometime in convicting the kidnappers.

It was a singular brand.

When the day was fully come he could trace its outlines quite perfectly.

It brought to his mind some of his experiences in Utah, where he had been as a journalist.

In Salt Lake City, in Ogden, and in other places in that territory, he had seen, over places of worship, over school-houses, over stores of all sorts, even over saloons, the representation of a human eye, a large one, under the legend in semicircle: Holiness Unto the Lord.

The brand on the bag was the representation of a human eye.

But there was a difference between it and the Morman representation, which is that of a perfect eye; it was blurred at the outer angle—had a blink.

Over it, instead of the legend, was a name, which, though he had, of course, to read it backwards, he soon made out—Thomas J. Evans.

He wondered passingly at the distinctness with which he saw the reverse of the brand and of the letters.

This was afterwards explained by the thinness of the stuff of the bag, and the clear-cut distinctness with which they were stamped—in addition to which should be mentioned the brilliance of the sunlight in this on-the-border-of-the-desert region, and the clearness of the air—which two things make transparent what is only translucent in the vapory atmosphere and dimmer sunlight of the East.

As this wonder was passing through his mind, the company came to a stop, to his great relief the bag was stripped from his torso, over his head, and he could look about—when his eyes had again adjusted themselves to distances—which they seemed to do through his blinking a number of times—though for a considerable while they saw objects very much as a hand which has been asleep lays hold of things—not clumsily, but numbly.

These objects were not distant.

The halt had been made in a narrowing defile.

There was an almost perpendicular wall on either hand.

Immediately in front was a heavy gate, at which one of the horsemen, dismounted, was working with the fastening, resenting the trouble that it was giving him with a muttered profanity, while those about the prisoner were heaping imprecations upon him for his awkwardness.

In a niche in the wall, half hidden by a boulder, Emory saw a sentinel, who, at a command from the leader, was about to descend to assist in the opening of the gate, when it came open, and the party rode through and on—leaving the dismounted man to reclose and secure it and follow.

Emory now had a full view of a valley, glimpses of which he had caught through the bars of the gate.

It was probably a mile long and a little over a quarter of a mile wide.

It was simply a greater widening of the defile through which the gate had been approached, bounded on either hand by continuations of the precipices which he felt he could almost touch at the removal of the bag—walls a hundred feet or so high, which re-approached sufficiently, it could be seen, to be gated at the other end of the valley.

It was evident, from its position with relation to the rising sun, that it ran east and west. Near the southern wall flowed a sluggish stream.

Along the northern bank of this there was a strip of cultivated land, probably two hundred yards wide.

Near the northern wall, about midway between the gates, at the side of an immense corral, was a cluster of sod buildings, chiefly stables.

Somewhat apart from these, however, and nearer the wall, was a long, low, narrow building.

It was only a single room deep.

In its front there were at least a dozen rude doors.

Emory surmised, what he found afterwards to be true, that each of these belonged to a room.

A projection from the wall came to the middle of this dwelling.

The cavalcade rode to the middle of the front of the building, and Emory was told to dismount.

When he reached the ground he could hardly stand.

When we remember that he was but recovered from a severe illness, and take into the account what he had passed through in the course of the past twenty-four hours, this is not matter for wonder.

Nor is it remarkable that he could not suppress a groan.

He tottered, and nearly fell.

One of his conductors started forward to support him.

He recovered himself by a strong effort of will, and looked about independently, if not somewhat defiantly.

He could see that this did not lower him in the estimation of the men who had him in charge.

Whatever they might be going to do with him subsequently, they made temporary disposition of him at once—by leading him through the middle one of the numerous front doors, through the room into which it opened, which he noticed to be furnished with a number of cots, a table, three or four common chairs, and some rough benches—through a door at its rear, into an apartment which seemed to have been hewn in the living rock.

He had but to glance about with some care to see that this was partially true.

A natural cave, in the projection of the cliff, had been enlarged.

The resultant apartment was well lighted by windows cut through the sides.

With the thought which is always in the prisoner's mind, he glanced at these windows.

But they were higher up than he could reach, even from a table, and strongly barred.

The two men who conducted him into the rockhewn, but perfectly comfortable cell, unbound his hands, and at once left him.

The morning was rather close.

The windows were slightly open, for the sake of ventilation.

It was evident that whatever fate might be proposed for him, he thought, as he glanced about, there had been care taken that he might be at present comfortable.

There had even provision been made that he might take a bath—a thoughtfulness that had not manifested itself in either the Houston or the Adnogal House.

A little out from a corner sat a tub two-thirds filled with cold water while near it was a large pail full of boiling-hot water.

On a chair near these vessels were soap, a sponge and a bath towel.

Fatigued as he was, he could not withstand this temptation.

The bath greatly refreshed him.

To his surprise, when he lifted the towel, he found a nightshirt.

There were slippers beside the chair.

When he had gotten into the former of these and slipped on the latter he made for the bed, which stood in the corner diagonally across.

The mattress was of hair, the sheets and cases were sweet to the nostrils and snowy to the eyes, the pillows looked and felt fluffy.

As he threw himself down, he again cast his eyes about, and—

But it is but fair to let him go to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DID HE DRINK IT?

THE things which he saw as his eyes closed were:

A writing-table covered with green baize, and well stocked with pens, ink and paper; shelves covered with books, most of them looking as if they might be works of reference; a large ward-robe; some not-bad pictures, and a low, narrow door opposite that of entrance.

But he simply noticed, did not note them.

Oblivion came with his head's touching the pillow.

Still his falling asleep was not so instantaneous that he had not been also conscious that there were curtains at the windows, and beneath one of them a rod, with a hook at one end, by which they might be drawn.

But he did not rise to draw them; as, because of the height of the windows, he had not needed to do before he proceeded to take his bath. The descent of sleep was too sweet and grateful to be delayed for anything.

It was made all the more delightful by a rippling murmur.

There was a slight wonder in his mind as to what caused that murmur, and from where it came.

But the wonder was rather in the region of sub-consciousness.

It leaped for a moment into full consciousness.

But it could wait for gratification till the descending sleep had risen.

He was disturbed at midday.

As he was becoming dimly aware of half-awakeness, a rich voice said:

"Dinnah's now serbed!"

As his eyes slightly opened, he saw a negro, one of those dry-black fellows, who are the perfection of house-servants—in white cap and apron—the cap intimating that he was cook as well as waiter—standing in the middle of the apartment, a napkin over his a arm, a salver in his hands, on which steamed food and coffee.

As his eyes reclosed, he said:

"Out o' here, you black rascal!"

With a "Yah, yah!"—showing all his white teeth—the negro went, saying:

"All right, massah!" as he would not have said

it to a Northern man—to whom the words might have been the same; but the tone would have been very different.

In Emory he had recognized the Southerner.

As to Emory, as he redropped asleep, he thought vaguely:

"In that nigger I have a friend!"—in his mind the word nigger not representing the contempt it embodies in the speech of the Northern man.

In common with his class—speaking geographically—he looks upon the negro—or nigger—as he does upon a dog—holding the dog in such high estimation that he is not long without one.

He expects faithfulness from his dog, and he gets it.

He expects the same thing from a nigger, and gets it from him also—never fails to get it—on the ground, possibly, that one generally gets from another what he expects from him—the expectation being based not only upon the estimate of that other, but also upon disposition towards him.

When Emory again awoke, the negro was once more in the room, spreading a table.

Now Emory turned over, yawned, gave evidence that he was disposed to rise.

Seeing this, the negro went to the wardrobe, unlocked it, and, leaving the key in the door, turned towards the table, saying:

"You'll find in dar, massah, what ebah you wants!"

Emory rose, went to the wardrobe, and found hanging there several suits of clothes.

"Look in de dwahs!" was suggested.

There were two of these beneath the door.

They were found to be well stocked with underwear and linen.

Selecting a suit of the former, Emory—the negro having gone out—put it on.

It was rather a snug fit, but he found that he could wear it with a degree of comfort.

Then he took out a linen shirt and put it on.

It was too tight across the chest, too short in the sleeves, and the band would not button about the neck.

He had to resume the shirt which had served him for a day on the box of the stage, and for a night on horseback in a meal bag, and which it takes no great stretch of imagination to see could not have been very attractive.

Then he tried a suit of clothes.

The trousers came only five-sixths of the way from his knees to his heels, were too tight across the hips, the waistcoat would not button, and had he allowed his shoulders to take a natural position the coat would have split in the back.

Sambo having returned by this time, Emory said:

"Everything in the wardrobe and in the drawers was intended for a smaller man! How's that?"

"Dunno! I's on'y de cook, de waitah, de body sarbant! I's tole t' open de wahdrobh, pint out de dwahs, an' lebe de key in de doah! Dah my 'sponsibil'ty en's!"

"Who told you?"

"Dunno! I's 'ployed 's a cook in Kansas City, an' heah I is! Dat's all I knows 'bout 't. But"—in a whisper—"I sees some mightah queah fings!"

Emory donned the mealy suit which he had taken off in the morning, was brushed down with a whisk which hung beside a half-length French mirror, and sat down to satisfy an appetite which was a compensation for having missed three meals and been constrained to an exercise under conditions which might have been the death of anyone but a trained athlete.

But before he began to eat Sambo said:

"Wait a minit'!" went to a corner, and returned with a bottle, from which, as he approached the table with a grin, he wiped the water with which it dripped.

"What's that?" asked Emory.

The bottle was held near him and he saw that the brand was: A Drop of Dew-Drop.

Sambo filled a large glass in the most waiterish style.

Did Emory take it off?

There!

Remember that his full name and titles were: The Reverend Emory M. Emberson, B. D.

Still my fidelity to fact as an historian compels me to admit that he slightly caught his breath as he asked:

"Where did you get that, Sambo?"

"Obah dar, in de co'nah!"

The rippling murmur to which he had gone to sleep was now explained.

There was a clear, cold spring in the corner towards which the "boy" had nodded his head, with a grin.

"What becomes of the water on leaving here?" asked Emory.

With a show of all the negro's feeling of importance in giving information, Sambo replied:

"Hit passes frough erffen pipes to de correll, fur de waterin' ob de stock—ob which more comes inter dis balley dan belongs to it, I's finkin' sometimes!"—the observation after the dash uttered in a voice which was sunk to almost a whisper.

Then—the folding of the napkin indicating

that the supper was concluded—he went to the narrow door, unlocked it, and brought a box of the highest grade cigars that could be procured at the West at that early period—which is saying more for their quality than may be suspected; for the Western man is never careful of his money—especially when he is spending it on whisky or tobacco.

As Emory lighted a cigar, Sambo, taking the rod with the hook at its end, closed the curtains of the windows so adroitly that Emory was sure that he had had much experience on Pullmans, gathered up the dishes, and what of the supper had not been consumed, disappeared, returned, made sure that nothing more was wanted, and went out finally, the table linen under his arms, the folding table on which the supper had been served in his hands, closing the door, which secured itself with a spring lock, after him, with a heel.

Left to himself Emory began to look about.

He saw traces on the ceiling and walls of what nature had done in the formation of the apartment.

The cave which had been chiseled into it had evidently been a large one.

All the workmen had had to do was to give it proper shape.

The spring was just where nature had placed it.
The chisel had no mission but that of hollowing and shaping its bowl a little.

In this bowl had been replaced the bottle of A Drop of Dew-Drop.

This made him think of the closet—there being so close a connection between the drinkable and the smokable.

Its door had no more been relocked or denuded of its key than had that of the wardrobe.

Opening this door, he could not but smile at what he saw.

The closet was simply a smaller cave, into which a low, narrow entrance had, before the coming of man, admitted whatever beasts saw fit, and were small enough, to enter it from the outer immensely larger cave.

On the floor he saw the case from which had been taken the bottle which he had just seen lying so snugly in the bowl of the spring.

There were other cases—some of wines, some of beers.

On the shelves were eleven boxes of cigars—each with a different label from that which had not been returned, from which the cigar in his mouth had been taken.

From the closet he went to the book shelves. Besides the cyclopedias and other books of reference, which, probably because of his journalistic experience he had noticed as he fell asleep, were a good many volumes of history, fiction, poetry, science and philosophy—some of which—he could not help smiling in noticing this, though it must be admitted he was somewhat offended by it—looked familiar, and were found to have his name on the fly leaf.

They were from the little library which he had brought to the West with him.

Taking a book, and placing the lamp on the writing-table, he sat down to read.

But finding no pleasure in that, and feeling drowsy, he went to the spring, made sure that the label of the bottle was not submerged, and was about to go to bed, when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" he said.

A key was inserted, the bolt was shot back, and entered—one at whom he looked with astonishment, and exclaimed:

"What in the name of mischief are you doing here!"

The enterer started back. His eyes were wide. He asked in a hushed tone—which called to Emory's mind that he should not have spoken so loudly:

"Who're y'u?"

"Don't you know me, Red?"

"Em! by thunder! But where 'd y'u git them whiskers?"

Explanations followed.

Those of Red were to the effect that he and his father had had as hot a time as if they had stirred up a hive, or a "tree," and he had resolved to strike out for himself.

The next day he had dropped into Jim Shelby's blacksmith shop.

That worthy had said that the county had produced but one young fellow with grit enough to tackle the West.

Upon that he (Red) had taken a sudden resolution to prove that the blatherskite—Shelby did not belong to the same political party with him—did not know the amount of grit there was in the composition of every young fellow in the county.

He had learned Emory's address from Mr. Shad, and dropped him a note to the effect that the undersigned was starting for Whackston, and would come from there to see him, if such a procedure would be entirely agreeable to him.

Upon reaching that place the author of the note had been grieved and rattled—it is remarkable how quickly one used to pick up the slang of the West—by not finding a letter from his old playmate.

Through the years he had saved enough money from the sale of the flesh, fur, skins and scalps of wild animals to get him to Whackston, and little more.

He took the first job that offered.

"An' here y'u see me, Em," he continued, "bottle washer t' a nigger!"

At this Emory laughed so heartily that Red raised a finger, and frowningly warned him to not make so much noise.

The laugher's face straightened, as he said:

"You know, Red, that had I been at home when your letter came, I would have more than written—I would have come to meet you! But the past is gone! The present is here! Go over to the spring in the corner, and see if you can't find some consolation! I must put this book away!"

His face to the shelves, his back to the spring, Emory heard a prolonged gurgling.

A minute later, between smackings of his lips, and cluckings of his tongue from the roof of his mouth, accompanied by blinkings of his eyes, Red said:

"Ah, Em! say, thet 's th' stuff!"

"What?"

"'T's too good t' name!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

BALDY AGAIN.

HE was awakened the next morning by loud talking.

It was all done by one man.

The replies were in a lower tone.

The loud voice employed no insulting epithets.

These no Western man—no matter how subordinate his position—would have endured.

He would have resented them at any hazard.

But the tone itself was so domineering that he concluded that it was from someone in authority.

It could not have come from one who had not some show of right to employ it to such men as those who had conveyed him to that place.

He asked of Sambo—who entered while the voice was in full flood:

"Who's making so much fuss outside?"

"De boss!" was the half grinning, half frightened reply. "Who's he?"

"Dunno! I knows dat 'e 's de wust man on de Cowskin—an' dat 's ekal t' sayin' dat 'e 's de wust man in de worl'! Oh, massa, de fings w'at goes on heah 's suffin' awful! I fink sometimes dat de good Lawd'll tumble de hills on de wicked men an' on me wiff 'em!"

"The Cowskin! Is that the name of the stream which goes through the valley?"

"Eh-heh!"

The loud voice was still going on without.

It asked: .

"How did the accident happen to the east gate?"
The answer was perfectly audible in the cell:

"Mike's team ran away, and went bang into it! The tongue of the wagon shot up, and carried away the upper part!"

"Why hasn't it been fixed?"

"It happened this morning, and we've been so busy brandin' mavericks that we haven't had time!"

This answer, probably from the foreman, seemed to be satisfactory to the boss.

He asked:

"Are you nearly through with the branding?" "We'll have finished it in another hour."

The boss's voice lowered to a more natural key in:

"I'm told you got the prisoner through all right! Where is he?"

"In the cave."

"Have you had him out for exercise?"

"No."

The boss's voice was higher than ever:

"Why haven't you? I couldn't get here sooner! When I stopped at Whackston, and left him in your charge, I thought that it was understood that he was not to be treated as a rat in a hole! Bring him out, and give him a chance to breathe and stretch his legs! I'll be back soon."

There was the sound of the going to the west of a galloping horse, and a kindly mannered, though roughly dressed man entered to Emory, and asked him if he would not like to go out for a little.

The two were soon in the open, Emory as free as his companion—the difference between them, in this regard, being that the former had not the means with which to assert or protect his freedom.

They walked towards the corral where the branding was in progress.

A young steer had just been lassoed.

The sizzing of the red-hot iron in the flesh, and the bellowing of the victim would have caused Emory to turn away—he was sick at heart—had not the character of the brand attracted his attention.

He asked to see the branding-iron.

Had it been smaller, it might have been used in branding the bag, his experience in which he would not be liable to forget.

It represented a blink-eye.

All things taken into account, the reader will not be surprised to learn that he was not surprised, when, a little later, the boss came galloping back, to recognize in him the man with whom he had had the vinegar-and-pepper-and-salt adventure at the Houston House—Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cowskin.

Tom, or—to be more courteous—Mr. Evans, dismounted, approached, and shook hands with him cordially, saying:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Walker, that the fortunes of war have made it necessary for us to lay violent hands upon you. But I hope that you have been at least bodily comfortable since you reached the valley!"

Disguising his voice as best he could, Emory replied:

"Yes, thank you!"

Mr. Evans turned to the foreman—the man who had just brought the prisoner from the cell—and said:

"That's the best lot of horses that's been brought in lately! That black one with the bald face is especially fine!"

This brought to Emory's mind Baldy, and made him think that he would like to be on his back, and have some yards start of his pursuers, let them be mounted as they might; and caused him to conclude that Mr. Evans had returned from a corral to the westward in the valley, which a remark he had heard led him to conclude was set apart to horses as the one near the dwelling was to bovines.

"I was thinking of having them tried this morning," said the foreman; "but the fixing of the gate will prevent that."

"Let the gate go for the present. Bring the horses. We'll show Mr. Walker some horsemanship!"

While this command was being executed, the boss, the foreman, and the prisoner—who was still careful to disguise his voice, and spoke as little as possible—chatted together—the boss saying, among the many things which he uttered—the silence of anyone did not inconvenience him in the least—that in his opinion—and this was one of the sagest remarks that came from him—compromise was better than fighting, in county-seat as in other squabbles—his language being that of

a cultivated man—as was that of the foreman—which would have been a surprise to their interlocutor had it not been that he knew the West, and that there, under the roughest dress, and speech, and manner, a polished gentleman was often in hiding, and had he not been what it is hard to surprise—a journalist.

When the horses came, one of them—the black one with the white face, who attracted the attention of all, of even Sambo, who had come out in white cap and apron "t' see de fun," and who, in common with so many of his color, was a born and trained horseman—whinnied as if he recognized someone.

"Who is it?" asked the boss.

Speaking well through his nose—as if he had a cold—Emory said:

"There is as much difference in horses as there is in men. It takes some of them a long while to become acquainted, some a very short while. He may have formed a sudden attachment for one of the men who brought him here."

"Maybe so," said the boss, in a tone which showed that he had doubts on the point, or that he had paid little attention to what had been said, and proceeded to superintend the saddling of the horse which had been selected as the one to be first ridden.

There was little trouble in riding him—a fine gelding.

The one next chosen bucked, but he was soon mastered.

Another reared, fell backwards, and would have crushed the one with whom he was struggling, under the heavy Mexican saddle, had the man not darted to one side, as his back touched the ground, with the quickness of a snake.

Others were attempted, with the result of showing the wickedness of the Western horse and the skill of the Western horseman in perfection.

Baldy—for the reader needs hardly to be told that the black horse with the white face was he was saved till the last.

It could be seen that he was not only the finest, but the most vicious, of the herd of twenty or more of which he was one.

As he came up Emory kept well in the back-ground—knowing that, if he got near enough, he would nose at a pocket for a lump of sugar, which had formerly been there for him daily—to the exhaustion of the Adnogal House sugar-bowls.

Such an action upon his part would have revealed the friendship and understanding between them, and made impossible the events which I am about to relate.

To distract attention, Emory remarked:

"A fine lot of horses!" and asked: "Where did you get them?"

The remark and the question were entirely successful in accomplishing his purpose.

The boss—after looking around on his gang and grinning, and receiving as many grins in return, as there were mouths in the gang to grin—replied, with a wink of the eye which was not blink:

"That's a leading question, Mr. Walker!" and Emory had—of which there was little need—more evidence of the character of the men into whose hands he had fallen, and felt mount in him a disposition to do a deed of daring, to free himself, and astonish them.

By this time Baldy was saddled.

Who was to mount him?

Everybody did not volunteer, as everybody had done with relation to every other horse that had been saddled.

The boss had to designate a man—the boldest, the most capable, the most powerful of those who had taken part in the battles royal between man and beast, which had now been succeeding each other for more than two hours.

This man seemed to be in readiness for any trick that Baldy might see fit to try, excepting the only one on which he relied. He did the thing which Emory looked for him to do.

As a leg swung over him, he sank to the ground, and the man stood above him.

Then he rose and shot away suddenly.

The one who bestrode him now was not so selfpossessed as had been the one by whom he was bestridden when he shot out of, and away from, Squire Riley's livery stable—which, however, it is only fair to him to say, he might have been had he been under the eye of a Queen.

The way at which the four-footed fiend went up the valley, to the west—his bald face having been set in that direction because of the mishap which had come to the gate at the east—was enough to take away the breaths of the beholders.

The effect it had on the rider can only be imagined; for—for reasons which shall appear—Emory never heard him describe it.

He had pulled violently at the reins at once.

This had put Baldy on his guard.

He had the bit in his teeth, and he kept it there.

It is doubtful if Emory could have gotten it out within so short a course.

In a twinkle the upper end of the valley was reached.

The runaway could go no farther.

Out went his legs, and stood as the shores of a man-of-war on the docks.

He stopped so suddenly that the rider—who, bold as he was, had probably lost his head—was taken unaware, and went on, at no abatement of speed, and struck the wall, at one side of the gate, with such force that he rolled to the ground, as limp as a rag.

Whether he was killed, Baldy did not seem to care.

He went to grazing, and was soon caught, and brought back to the point from which he had started, by one who had been commanded to do so, and who had started off with three who had been detailed to look after the man who had not stopped when Baldy did.

Looking him over, with the rest, Emory said, with a smile:

"It seems to me that you fellows need a lesson in horsemanship!"

"Think so?" asked the boss, in a tone which showed that, for the moment, he was forgetting that he was speaking to a guest, and added: "Maybe you think you can give it!"

"I am willing to try!" was the modest, but at the same time aggressive reply.

"Stand back!" ordered the boss.

The men obeyed, and there was not one of them near Baldy, save the one who had his hand on his rein near the left bit-ring.

"Now," he proceeded—with the mildness with which he might have proposed a duel with the revolver—"Mr. Walker, if you think you can teach us to ride, mount!"

Emory stepped forward, rubbed Baldy's nose, examined the girths, and—mounted!

Baldy did not sink to the earth, but, at a touch from Emory's heel, darted away—in the direction from which he had been led back; for—the injured gate still in mind—his head had been turned to the west.

But, at the word, he came, first to a trot, and then to a walk.

The men cheered.

Emory turned, and rode towards them.

With the exception of Mr. Evans and Red, they advanced to meet him.

Half a dozen of them were reaching out for Baldy's reins.

"Not so fast! Stand back! Now, Baldy!" said Emory.

And Baldy dashed through them, over them, away from them.

They were so overturned, mixed up, discom-

fited, that there was nothing to fear from them. The same was not true of Mr. Evans.

Had he refrained from advancing because he was on guard against what was now transpiring?

Revolver in hand, he was waiting for his game to settle to a steady run.

Why had Red remained with him?

Glancing over his shoulder, Emory saw him stoop, pick up a stone, and draw back, as if to hurl it at him.

There was a crack.

The stone had struck, not gently, and Mr. Evans' revolver had flown from his hand, which he was holding, elbow in air, as if it were causing him great pain.

Had this not eventuated, Baldy would probably have been riderless.

As it was, he went, rider and all, over the east gate—or what remained of it—as if he had been a bird.

From midair, Emory looked back.

The men whom he had left so unceremoniously were mounting hurriedly.

But Baldy was under him, and he had not much fear that they would succeed in overtaking him.

Nor had he any fear to speak of in the regard of the sentinels.

He had noticed that they had walked along the cliffs to enjoy the riding.

They sent a ball or two after him, but they went wild, and, the gate cleared, he was in the defile, and so thoroughly protected from them.

CHAPTER XXV.

TWO WELL-DIRECTED STONES.

THE valley in which he had been held prisoner lay between two of the first of the waves, so to speak, which grow greater and greater westward till they culminate in the Rocky Mountains, with their eternal white-caps.

Emerging—as he did in a half mile or so—from the defile he looked out on a country very much like that with which he had become familiar between Whackston and Breezemead—the difference being that the undulations here were more sweeping, their apexes higher, and the troughs between them deeper.

There was no well-defined trail before him.

But the hints which the wind and the bridge had given him were fresh in his memory, and gave him a good general notion of the direction in which he should travel. This was fortunate; for what hint of a trail there was soon failed him—diffused in wagon tracks.

The outlaws were wise.

They had not beaten a track to their lair.

There was a light, steady wind from the south, and he, of course, knew that by taking and keeping this on his right cheek he would be traveling to the southeast.

He acted accordingly.

After this, he had not ridden more than a quarter of a mile, when a ball whistled near him.

The time of the Civil War had been a vacation to him—which, as a little boy, he had spent in and about camps, in the neighborhood of skirmishes, on the fringes of great battles.

He was, consequently, familiar with the songs which various missiles sing.

This one he thought to be from a long-range rifle.

It caused him to turn in his saddle and look back.

What he saw brought a heel-touch to Baldy.

He bounded forward.

But his rider checked him—for two reasons: it would not do to wind even him at the outset of the tremendous ride that was ahead; and Emory had seen, not only a bunch of horsemen in pursuit, but

a flag waving from a cliff, probably a signal to confederates in the direction in which he was moving.

These things had been seen from the apex of an undulation.

The dash which Baldy had made had carried him well down its other side.

Emory noticed that the trough into which he was descending trended to the east of south.

He had perfect faith in his mount's sureness of foot, which he had tested in rough country after jackrabbits.

Through this trough he moved for an hour at a pace which would have been killing for any other horse.

Then he climbed the precipitate bank to the left.

There he paused for Baldy to blow, to take a look about, and to have a bit of a think.

Shading his eyes and scanning the country, he could not see a sign of a living creature anywhere, saving a hawk sailing above the horizon.

Stop!

What is that?

A cloud of dust, to the east, on the trail leading to Whackston.

For a time he could make out nothing in the cloud.

Then a gust of wind disturbed it, and he could see that it enveloped a company of horsemen.

Was it the one that he had seen leaving the valley in pursuit of him?

Probably.

But all of it?

It is necessary now to say that at the pace at which Baldy had traveled he must have covered in the neighborhood of fifteen miles-which was possible from the facts that his muscles were of steel—the best of steel, and that the bottom of the trough—through which must pass volumes of water in one of the cloud-bursts which the American Desert knows at times-was-excepting in short spaces, where great rocks lay loosely together, over which Baldy had to be walked-hard sand, which made excellent footing.

Some miles back the trough had crossed the trail.

Could it be possible that his pursuers had not noticed that he had not turned into the latter, but kept the former?

He thought not.

They were not only irontiersmen, but outlaws as well-up to all the tricks of pursuit and escape.

Then in crossing the trail he had seen that

there would be no use in making attempt to hide traces.

The trail was hard, and the sand of the trough virgin.

A horse's footmarks could not have been hidden from a groceryman fresh from Broadway.

He suspected that the main body—in the hope that he might see it from some such position as he now occupied—had continued on the trail to Whackston, while a detachment had taken the trough after him.

He had dismounted, and loosened the girth, that Baldy might have a chance for a blow—which he had taken, and gone to nibbling at a rosinweed.

Emory now patted his shoulder, pulled his head around by the rein, rubbed his nose, and whispered in his ear:

"But they won't catch us napping, old boy!" and led him along the top of the ridge on which they stood, towards a break which he saw between two immense boulders, a few yards to the north.

This break he had noticed as he had brought Baldy up from a gallop, and, when he reached it, found, as he expected, that it gave him fair protection for observation of the trough.

He had not much more than taken his position

at it, when he heard the muffled beating of the feet of horses rushing on the sand.

He was not armed.

But he could throw.

And there were stones at hand.

Selecting a few of these which were suitable, he took position, Baldy's rein hanging loosely over his left arm.

Not expecting ambuscade—knowing that their quarry was not armed—two horsemen rushed, at full career, within range.

A stone struck one of them in the face, and he tumbled from his horse backwards.

The other, reining in, turned half about.

A stone struck him behind an ear, and he came to the ground on his face.

Emory said:

"Baldy, 'tisn't a bad idea to know how to do anything! There's no telling when it may come in handy! And whatever you know how to do, you ought to know how to do well! I've gotten a good deal of amusement out of knowing how to throw stones and things! Now I've gotten profit out of it!" and led him down to the trough, mounted, and rode away.

The sun was still not set when he saw, to the southeast, two large cottonwood trees—the two of which he had asked the King of the Road, toward

the close of his first day on the throne with that potentate, if they were Hoax's—that is, if they were the ones which indicated where the horse of that name had instinctively forded the Quicksand.

They were soon aligned to him, and, so directed, he rode to the river's brink.

Without hesitation, Baldy entered the water, and came out at the roots of the tree opposite the one at the roots of which the discoverer of the passage had made land.

Emory entered Breezemead almost exactly forty-eight hours after, so independently of his will, leaving that city.

He would not have been the horseman he was had he not thought first of the comfort of Baldy, and ridden directly to the livery-stable where he belonged.

The men did not know the rider, nor were they glad to see the ridden.

One of them said:

"After that devil of an Episcopal preacher went away we couldn't do anything with the other devil—the bald-faced one—that thought so much of him! So we sent him to a ranch, from where, we were told the other day, he was stolen. Who are you? You must be that man Emberson, or some other devil, or you couldn't 'a' come on Baldy!"

"Take the horse," replied Emory, "and ask no questions, or some one of the numerous devils in whom you seem to believe may be disposed to settle with you!"

But the men could do nothing with him, and Emory had to lead him to his stall.

This done, he made his way to the Adnogal House.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE HOP.

As he approached the Adnogal House, he noticed that it was brilliantly lighted—as brilliantly as a house can be lighted with kerosene—which was as brilliant an illuminator as could be employed; for gas had not yet been introduced at Breezemead, and electricity was still to be used as an illuminator.

But brilliancy, in common with other mundane things, is relative, and were gas unprocurable and electricity unknown anywhere to-day, one, by a little use of the imagination, can see what brilliant effects might be procured with kerosene.

There were the sounds of stringed instruments. They were not giving forth music.

They were being tuned.

There was evidently to be a hop at the Adnogal. Brother Gurnsey, as the landlord of that hostelry was commonly called—with, generally, a smile, and a peculiar emphasis on the brother—brother

Gurnsey being a Methodist—a leading Methodist —this would have awakened surprise in Emory's mind had he not known brother Gurnsey so well -had he not heard him remark more than once: "The landlord is a public servant, and must conduct himself in accordance with the moral

standard of his customers, rather than try to force

his upon them!"

"Which wouldn't pay!" Dick Erksine once said, on hearing him so express himself to the Methodist preacher and the Official Board of the Methodist Church, who had called upon him to labor with him in relation to his bar, card and billiard tables, and the dances which he occasionally gave, or allowed, under his roof.

Emory saw from the extraordinary illumination, from the carriages which rolled up, from the elaborate get-up of the ladies who left them, and from the sprinkling of gentlemen in evening-suits —that the ball that was about to open was to be no ordinary affair.

When I say that among the carriages there was not a single barouche, berlin, or even a coupé, it may be thought that "rolled up" is too highsounding; this impression may be increased by my adding that they were chiefly single and doubleseated buggies, that there were a good many democrat and a sprinkling of springless farm and lumber-wagons; but can anything on wheels come up without their rolling?

The dress-suits were wrinkled, as if they had been taken from the bottoms of trunks, where they had been pressed down for a long while.

There were not many decollete women.

Some of these few had beautiful, milk-white shoulders—which were all the whiter in contrast with their sunburned necks—the white and the brown touching each other very distinctly where the collars of their ordinary dresses terminated.

But most of the women were dressed as they would have been at a church-sociable.

The same was true of most of the men—though some of them appeared to have simply cleaned up a bit in coming in from the fields, and many were in cow-boy jackets and leathern breeches, the latter in some cases stuffed into the tops of high-heeled boots.

None of these particulars of male costume were true, of course, in the cases of the business and professional men of Breezemead, or of the comparatively few of the same classes from Whackston and other neighboring towns—that is, towns within a radius of a hundred miles—all of which were more or less represented—excepting Centreville and Butternut City—though—. But let that appear in its place.

Stepping into the office, Emory met Mr. Gurnsey, who appeared embarrassed in recognizing him—or thinking he did—but reached out his hand, saying:

"Glad to see you! Make yourself at home!" and hurried away, as if he were too busy to stop to more than speak with any one, and passed into the bar, found Erskine and Hugh, beckoned them into a corner, and whispered:

"The plan miscarried!"

"What plan?" asked Dick.

"That of carrying off Walker!"

"Guess not! Saw him kidnapped, bagged, and taken away myself!"—in which statement Dick thought he was uttering the literal truth; for he was inside the building, looking from a window—the building from under the awning of which the kidnappers slunk—at the time when Emory was seized.

"But he just entered the office!" sibilated Mr. Gurnsey.

"What office?"

"The office of this hotel!"

"Bet a cow you're mistaken! Even if he wasn't kidnapped, how'd he come to be here?"

"Why," stammered Mr. Gurnsey, "when it was resolved to capture him at once, Day was sending

out invitations for this annual ball, and I had her send him one, thinking, for one thing, that it would throw him off his guard, and, for another——"

"Relieve the Adnogal from the possibility of being suspected of complicity in spiriting him away!" put in Hugh.

Mr. Gurnsey made no reply.

Dick said:

"Some people always have an eye to business! But if Walker's here, he's a bold man! He's not here, though, I tell you!"

"Yes, he is!" said Hugh. "Look there!"

"Yes, I'm here!" said Emory, in his rich baritone.

The admission was followed by his laugh.

Erskine asked, in a dazed way:

"What does this mean?"

With his slow smile and long-drawn grin, Hugh stepped forward, took Emory violently by the hand and said:

"Glad to see you, old man! But, b-y G-e-o-r-g-e, that beard does change you! If you and Walker aren't doubles, no two men ever were!"

"What's that about Walker?" asked a voice, which was not unlike Emory's, though not so strong.

Everybody turned towards the speaker.

There stood Editor Walker himself—just entered.

The likeness between him and Emory was really remarkable.

The only difference between them to be seen at first glance was in their sizes.

Together they could not be confounded, for Walker was a quarter of a head the shorter, of at least two inches the lesser chest measurement and wore a hat as many as two sizes the smaller; but one could see how, apart, they could hardly but be taken one for the other.

Emory knew Walker, but Walker did not know him.

When he was enlightened upon this point he—glancing towards the bar—asked in true Western style:

"Who's it on?"

"Me!" answered Emory; "but ——" winked at Hugh and was gone.

He was followed to the office by Mr. Gurnsey, to whom he gave the necessary orders with regard to his luggage, which he followed to his room, which he entered, with a laugh, in which the porter did not join, as he did not know its cause.

He had had a delightful adventure, to which reference will be made later.

Fishing out his razor-strop, mug and brush, he found some water in the pitcher, produced a lather, and, forcing the smile from his lips, was soon beardless—one of the most disagreeable of things to him being that of being taken for some-body else—which is always true of a thorough individual—and of all the persons whom I have ever met the Reverend Emory M. Emberson is the most thoroughly himself—which has always stood in the way of his advancement in the Church—but which has made him tremendously influential in all those departments of thought and activity which lie just outside the Church, or which intersphere the Church.

The first man he met on coming downstairs refused to shake hands with him.

This was Doctor Gray

He said:

"I thought I told you to raise a beard!"

"And I did!"

"Where is it?"

"Thrown away on the shaving paper!"

"Why did you cut it off? You need it in this climate!"

"I might as well die from a sore throat as from captivity, of having the loss of a horse saddled on me, or of being 'done up' for some one else!"

"What do you mean?"

"Let Dick and Hugh tell you!"—those two gentlemen following Mr. Walker, who was approaching Emory, hand extended for another shake, Dick winking as much as to say:

"We have the right man in hand now and propose to take care of him!"

When Emory had met the doctor he was passing through the office towards the dining-room, where the dancing was to take place—where, indeed, the first dance had already occurred.

In the course of the conversation which had followed this meeting he heard a bunch of horsemen ride up to the rear of the hotel.

Surmising that this might mean something to him, or to the real Mr. Walker, he re-entered the bar—followed by Dick, Hugh and the editor.

As he did so, a dozen rough men entered by the back door.

They were the men from whom he had escaped—Blink-Eyed Tom at their head.

Emory stepped forward into full view.

But he was not recognized, save as himself.

Though Tom made a side glance at the bar—he was evidently very thirsty—he did not order a drink at once, but made inquiry for Dick Erskine.

Dick and Hugh stepped forward—the real Mr. Walker between them—Dick saying:

"Hello, Tom, here's your man!"

Mr. Walker looked surprised and tried to smile, but he saw the situation was serious, and the attempt was not much of a success.

The gentleman—Thomas J. Evans—whom Emory had met in the valley of his captivity, was not there.

The desperado—Blink-Eyed Tom of the Cow-skin—replied:

"He's smaller'n he was this mornin'!"

"But here he is! Take him and go! When you've wet your whistle! What'll you have?"

"What'll I have? The same ol' pison, of course!"

The few minutes which it took for Tom and his companions to gulp down enough "pison" to kill fifty Eastern men—there were about a dozen of them—Emory employed in hurrying to his room and arming himself.

When he returned, Tom and his men were just laying hold of Walker.

Whipping out his revolver, he asked:

"What does this mean?"

"We'll explain later!" said Dick.

"I'd rather know now!" was the answer, and every one present, at least every one interested in the scene, knew the answerer, was aware of what he could do with his "gun," and realized that he had the drop; there was a pause upon the part of

the aggressors, and the intended victim gave him a thankful look.

"Now," he continued, "I know you to be a good entertainer, Mr. Evans!"

"How?" asked Mr. Evans, somewhat sullenly.

"I have partaken of your hospitality!"

"When?"

"I left your happy valley but this morning!"

"You?"

"Yes; I've shaven since!"

The gentleman—Mr. Thomas J. Evans—came out of his disguise at once, and, with a look of intelligence and admiration, bowed, saying:

"Your humble servant to command! But how

did you get over the Quicksand?"

"Rode over!" answered Emory—his eyes all about him—guarding his drop carefully.

"Where?"

"You'll have to ask Baldy, the horse which you so kindly lent me. But however I got over the Quicksand here I am! And I propose to see to it that if any one is again taken from this vicinity to your habitation he shall be taken more comfortably than I was!"

"How were you taken?"—the question coming not from the gentleman, Thomas J. Evans, but from the desperado—coming morosely.

"You need not ask, for you know! But it seems

to me this is rather a public place for private conversation!"

All showed that they saw this to be so, it having been mentioned, and, with tacit understanding, Erskine and Hugh led the way through the lower hallway, up the stairs and along the upper hallway to the room in which the reader has seen the Breezemead Vigilance Committee in meeting several times.

Erskine and Hugh were followed by Mr. Walker and Mr. Evans, who were followed by Emory and some others of the Vigilantes, who were in the bar when the suggestion as to its too great publicity for the matter in hand was made, who were followed by Mr. Gurnsey, Mr. Nothym and Mr. Bynson, who, from where they had conversed in the office, had seen the procession come from the bar.

When the room was reached and the guard placed, Emory said:

"Now, Mr. Evans, I'll tell these gentlemen how I was conducted to your domicile!"

When he had conveyed some notion of the exquisite agony which he had suffered from the way in which his hands had been tied, and from the bag—the mealy bag—over his head, and said: "It may be necessary—it is necessary at times—for civilized men to deprive a civilized man of his liberty; but it is only apparently civilized men—men

who, upon their being scratched, are found to be savages, or devils, who give to a prisoner unnecessary pain!"

All eyes were upon Mr. Evans.

He made no response.

Emory continued:

"I am—as I hear it expressed in the West—after nobody's scalp! I'm anxious that another should not suffer from thoughtlessness—for the kindnesses which were lavished upon me during the few hours of my imprisonment lead me to believe that the agonies which I endured on the way to prison came of thoughtlessness."

"I'll see to that!" said Mr. Evans.

"Now," said Emory, "I want you to bear with me while I ask Mr. Walker a question or twowhich I am sure he'll pardon me for asking!"

The gentle and apologetic tones in which this was said caused every one, including Mr. Walker, to nod his assent.

Emory proceeded:

"Mr. Walker, knowing—as you must have known, from the state of feeling existing between this city and Butternut City—that you were placing yourself in danger by coming here to-night, why did you come?"

Mr. Walker lowered his eyes, blushed, looked at Mr. Gurnsey and replied, hesitatingly:

"I received a note of invitation from Miss Day—and—I can think of no danger which would keep me away from any place to which she might express a desire that I might come!"

There was a general laugh.

"Why have you worked so hard in the interest of Centreville in the matter of the locating of the county-seat?"

"I was hired to do so!"

"Could you be hired to change sides?"

"No! When the county-seat question is settled I'll be open to engagement, and not till then!"

"You feel that your honor is engaged as much as it would be were you a lawyer and had been retained by a client?"

"Certainly!"

"I am glad to hear you say so! I would feel, under the same circumstances, precisely as you do! You may have heard that I have had some experience as a journalist?"

Mr. Walker nodded his head affirmatively.

"Have you any interest save a professional one in the success of Centreville?"

"No. On the other hand-"

Emory, in the fear that the temptation was so great that something might be said which would be held to be to the discredit of journalism—he being as chary of the honor of the profession in

which he had been as of that of the one in which he now was—interrupted with:

"You are about to be confided to the hands of a man"-he bowed to Mr. Evans-"who will take good and kindly care of you. The only thing you will suffer will be the restraint of your liberty. Where you are going you will find not only the comforts of life, but so many of the luxuries that you will have to guard against their using you rather than your using them! In other words, the eatables, the drinkables, the smokables, will be so abundant and of such excellent quality that there will be danger for you in the direction of over-indulgence-against which"-this with a smile and in a hortatory tone—"it is my vocational duty to warn you. Among the comforts, you will find in a wardrobe enough suits of clothes to change, if you see fit, for every meal, and drawers well stocked with linen and underwear—all of which, excepting one suit of underwear, you will find unworn and unsoiled-for which I am not to be thanked, but Nature, who used a little more of her raw material in making me than in creating you. Then, if you are as fortunate as I was, you will be entertained by, among other things, some wonderful displays of horsemanship!"

"But we won't let you entertain us!" put in Mr. Evans, with a laugh.

In this laugh Emory joined, together with everybody else—though he and the one who commenced it were the only two who thoroughly appreciated its cause.

The laugh ended, he asked, looking at Mr. Walker:

"Is there any request that you would like to make?"

"Only the privilege of seeing Miss Day before I go."

"Very well," replied Emory, when he had looked around and seen consent in the eyes of the Committee. "But the interview must take place in the parlor, on this floor! It can't be allowed that you see the Queen on the ground floor! And remember, that while you are in the parlor the doors and windows will be carefully watched!—not looked through!"

"Have you any doubts of the fidelity of Miss Day?"

"Not so far as you are concerned! Which I do not mean to her discredit! The woman who wouldn't betray any one for the man—. But there has never been such a woman, and there never will be!"

"And do you think-"

There was nothing unkindly in the laugh with which the meeting broke up.

While the interview was in progress Emory talked over with Mr. Evans and the leading Vigilantes the means of conveyance of the captive to his place of detention.

When Mr. Walker appeared his face was shining. Than he, no one ever submitted to imprisonment with a lighter heart.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN AMENDMENT.

I HAVE told of some unpleasant results which came to our hero through his beard—from the resemblance which it gave him to Editor Walker; there was an extremely pleasant one to which I have only referred.

In following his luggage from the office, he had mounted the stairway and was passing the door of the parlor, when it opened slightly and a delicate, white hand appeared, which beckoned to him.

When he had entered the dimly lighted room and the door had been closed after him two slender and delicate arms—

But what arms, to say nothing of lips, may do under such circumstances would better be imagined than told—in a history.

What they had done on this occasion was in his mind when he came down to a late breakfast the next morning.

When, the night before, the closed carriage and its attendant horsemen were gone away, he had not re-entered the dining-room, office or bar, but gone directly to his room, taken a bath, tumbled into bed, and, in spite of the music and dancing, fallen into a profound sleep, from which he had not awakened till long after daybreak.

The court—all of whom were men of affairs—in spite of the late, or early, hour at which they had retir d, had breakfasted long before and gone to their various employments.

The Queen was alone at table.

Though a little worn in appearance she greeted Emory cheerily and declared that she had never felt better.

"You would not like to have me repeat that remark to Mr. Walker when he gets back, if he ever does, would you?"

An anxious look flitted across her face, which was followed by a laugh, as she asked:

"Do you know that I am worried, Mr. Emberson?"

"You don't look as though you were, and, so, how could I be aware of it till you told me?"

"It seems to me that there were two Mr. Walkers here last night—one larger than the other! I—I—met him—ah—upstairs, and the—the—theother when I came down!"

"Do I look anything like Mr. Walker?" asked Emory, teasingly.

The Queen gave him a startled look, and said:

"You have the same complexion, your eyes are the same color, you have the same dark-brown hair, and——. What is the color of your beard?"

"Can't you guess?"

"No! You are the only man about who is cleanshaven. You must shave every morning, don't you?"

"Yes-when I'm not ill!"

"Oh! I remember! You had a two-weeks' growth of beard before you went away, but it was so unbecoming to you that I did not allow myself to look at it! Please tell me—what's its color?"

"Yellowish-brownish-auburnish-red!"

"The color of Mr. Walker's?"

"Almost exactly!"

"When did you shave last?"

"Last evening."

"When last before that?"

"The morning before the recovery of the county archives from the raiding Centrevillians!"

Her face and neck grew very red, her eyes drooped and she bit her lip, but managed to ask:

"Have another cup of coffee?"

When Emory came out of the dining-room he

met Squire Riley in the office and inquired after Baldy.

"He's all right! But the fellow who went into his stall this morning to curry him 's all wrong! I'll have to have him doctored and boarded! That horse will be the death of some of us yet! I can't get rid of him! When it was known that you wouldn't be about for some time I sent him to a ranch beyond the Quicksand. In three or four weeks I learned that he had been stolen. But last evening a bearded man—ha, ha!—rode him back!"

"What'll you take for him?"

"Take for him! Do you want him? You ought to have him! You are the only one who can do anything with him! If you want him he's yours!"

"Hear that, Mr. Gurnsey?"

"Yes."

"You mean it, Squire?"

"Of course, I do! I'd be glad to give you something of more value—though to you, who can manage him, for whom he has taken a fancy, there is not a better bit of horseflesh on the continent! I hope that he may serve you often as he did in that — plucky break you made from the den on the Cowskin!"

"How did you hear of that?"

"Tom told me."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes, and a fine man he is-in his way!"

As the Squire buttoned his overcoat, preparatory to going out into a sleet which was beginning to fall, Emory said to him:

"I'll be around after my property directly."

"He's yours!"

The Squire gone, in response to a look from Emory, Mr. Gurnsey said:

"He means it!"

This remark was in the making when two dilapidated individuals entered.

They looked as if they had been wading and walking most of the night.

One of them had a badly cut, bruised and swollen face.

The other was always putting his hand to the back of his head, as if he had been hurt there.

They inquired for Mr. Evans.

Mr. Gurnsey pretended to look over the register and said:

"We have no such man with us."

They appeared disappointed.

Emory asked:

"Had an accident?"

"Yes," replied the one with the sore face, "our horses were stampeded last night and I fell and cut my face in running after them." "What's the matter with the back of your partner's head?"

"Nuthin', fur's I know!"

Emory had fully recognized them as the two men, whom, David-like, he had bowled over in the swale beyond the Quicksand.

He asked them where they wanted to go.

"To Whackston," one of them replied.

"Please give them their breakfast, Mr. Gurnsey," said Emory, "and I'll see what can be done in the direction of helping them on their way."

He soon found a freighter, who was lightly loaded and who was willing to take them for a consideration.

Returning to the hotel, he told them what arrangement he had made.

They seemed thankful, did not want to talk, and, their breakfasts having been consumed, went out and joined the freighter, with whom they affiliated at once.

They were probably limbs from the same tree.

This matter settled, Emory went to the stable for Baldy.

After his recent treatment of a fellow-stableman, there was no one about willing to enter his stall.

Emory saddled him himself, mounted and was

pleased to find him as full of activity and energy as ever.

Plunging through the sleet, which was falling in sheets, he soon covered the five miles.

Which five miles?

What other than those lying between Breezemead and the Lone Tree Claim would he have thought of riding over in such a storm?

When he dismounted the sleet had so frozen upon him that he looked like a mailed warrior.

This did not prevent some one from being glad to see him.

How anxious he must have been to come to her! He asked if she had noticed how there was a ridge in the centre of the road out—the ridge which was in the centre of all roads, between the deep ruts worn by the feet of the teams, for nobody drove a single horse—people would almost have run out of their houses to see a horse driven singly—any one who could afford to drive at all could afford to drive a span—horses being so cheap that they could be had for a song, and it costing next to nothing to keep them.

Miss Avaway had noticed the ridge.

Emory told her how Baldy had insisted on galloping on this ridge, how his hind feet had slipped off at every other jump, how his front feet had slidden at the alternate jumps, how thus at every

second of the whole five miles both his neck and that of his rider had been endangered, adding:

"He is the greatest living horse! When I'm killed in equestrianism Baldy is the horse that I want to attend to the job!"

"How you do talk!"

"Then you would care if m" neck were to be broken?"

Her eyes gleamed.

That was the moment.

Emory took her hand and asked awkwardly enough:

"Will you be my friend?"

"I am your friend!"

"My—"

"I have long wanted to ask you a question which I may ask you now, may I not?"

"Yes, and a thousand more if you see fit!"

"How shall I ask it? You remember the first time we met—at the concert?"

"How can I ever forget it?"

"Well, that night I dreamed over and over that you were in trouble. I saw two men come to your door and heard them knock. I heard you speak to them from within your room. Then I saw you—looking and speaking and acting bravely, oh, so bravely!—in a room where there were several men.

Your revolver was in your hand, and you were master of them all! When I awoke it seemed to me that it was more than a dream!"

"Can you describe the men?"

"Yes, and more, I can name them—the two who would have taken you to where the others were, but whom you took there instead, at the point of the revolver, and those into whose presence you marched them."

"Then there is no need that I tell you that you had a vision! And I had dreams that night which I hope may prove to have been visions, also—waking dreams; for I did not dare to fall asleep, even had I been so disposed—which I was not; for my blood had been so stirred at and immediately after the concert that it would not quiet! Castle after castle arose to me, and each of them had a mistress!"

Miss Avaway withdrew her hand and arose, a constrained look in her face, saying:

"Please excuse me!" and left the room.

She was not much more than gone when her mother entered.

Though he remained long, in the hope that there might be such an event, he was not again alone with her.

As night was falling he was riding to Breeze-

mead furiously, keeping the ridge in the centre of the road, though, as the darkness deepened, Baldy showed a disposition to leave it.

There would have been more unacceptable things to him than a broken neck.

He had not been long in his room when there was a knock.

Hugh entered.

When he had lighted a cigar he asked:

"Where have you been all day, Em?"

"Where have you been?"—for it was very evident from his bespattered state that he, too, had been on the trail.

"Out to see my prairie-chicken! And, say, when can you tie that knot for us?"

"Whenever you like—if you are foolish enough to still want it tied!"—the comment accompanied by a misanthropic laugh.

With a wide-eyed stare, Hugh asked, anxiously:

"What's the matter with you?"

"When does it take place?"

The date, which had been settled upon that day, was mentioned, and Hugh—seeing that for some reason or another Emory did not want company—went away.

Within a week Emory received a letter running as follows:

"The Reverend Emory M. Emberson:

Editor Walker out of the way, Breezemead had little trouble in carrying the election by a good majority.

When the returns were in the Vigilantes had a "blow out."

Towards its close Dick Erskine arose, steadied himself on the shoulder of Hugh, who sat next to him, and said:

"I move you, Mr. Chairman, that a resolution of thanks be framed by a committee appointed by the chair for that purpose, engrossed and presented to (hic) the Reverend Emory M. Emberson, for (hic) not only the part that he has taken in bringing about the (hic) result which we are (hic) c'lebrabratin' this even (hic) ing, but for that (hic) result."

The motion was seconded.

Emory arose and moved that the word Baldy be substituted for the words the Reverend Emory M. Emberson.

Seconded and carried unanimously—much to Hugh's amusement, he, with the exception of Emory, who drank nothing but water, and so was mellowed only to the extent that the fumes of tarantula-juice could have a mellowing effect—he being the only sober man present, not excepting Brother Gurnsey.

The affirmative vote on the motion as amended was also unanimous.

When the rest of the company was under the table Emory and Hugh adjourned by going home.

Nobody enjoyed the joke of the amendment more than Editor Walker—who walked into the Adnogal the next day free, and happy—especially prospectively.

When Emory reached home—he had been away from the Adnogal for some time—he found that—in spite of the fact that it took but one figure to represent the hour—there was one stopping up to receive him.

Who?

When all had been arranged with regard to transporting Editor Walker to the cell which had been vacated, he had asked Mr. Evans:

"How's your hand?"

"Why?"

"The stone must have hurt it!"

"Which stone?"

"The one which you thought was coming after me, but which went in the opposite direction!"

"Did you see that?"

"Yes; and what became of the "

"Back-action ——————? Don't know! Before I could handle my 'popper' he was up the cliff, where only a mountain lion could have scaled it, over, and away!"

The next evening Red inquired for his old friend at the Adnogal.

Within a week they were in the little rectory, near the church—"baching it."

There-

But that is another story.

THE END.

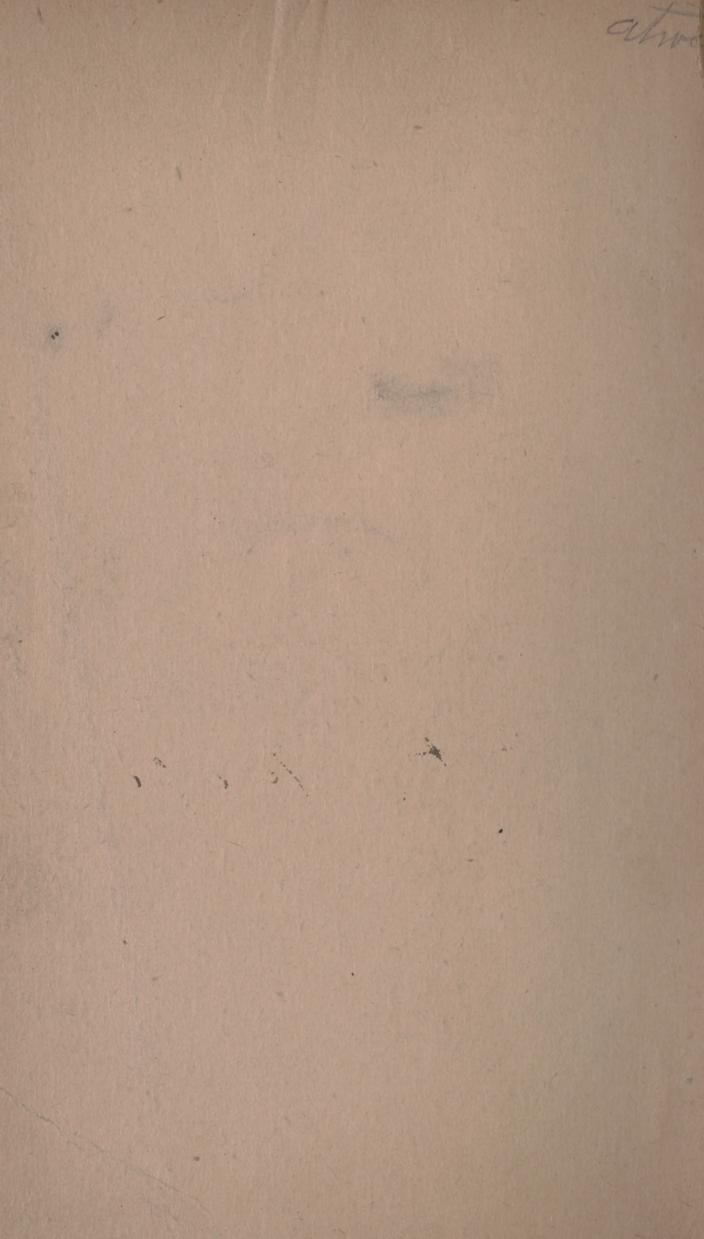


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